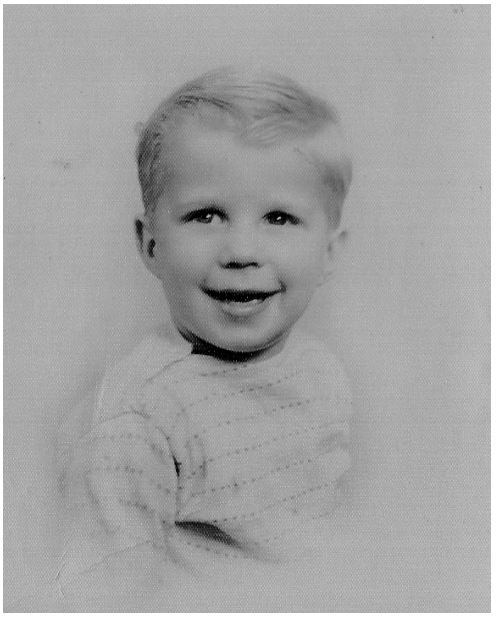
About Me

An Autobiographical Hodgepodge



Hugh Crawford Nicolay

Credits

Published by the Author Amazon Kindle Direct
Publishing ID # A3FX7BHPMM1ENCd

August 28, 2026

Copyright 2026

Hugh C Nicolay

All Rights Reserved

CONTENTS

Page	
07	Forward
08	My Autobiography
12	My Profile
15	The Places I Lived
31	The Schools I Attended
35	Erna Nixon
37	My Computers
39	My CLO Story
42	I How Became An Engineer
46	My Neuro History
49	My Cars
54	The Wet Riders
55	Wedding Plan B
57	Gone Fish'n
60	Remembering Florence Conner
64	Hall aSchool
66	Order of the Arrow
68	JGN Famous Relative
70	Movie Call
72	I Dinner with Chuck
74	My DNA Experience
76	Fit for What?
73	Letter to Dad
83	Maggie Move to Denver
85	Hello Half Brother
87	Time and Clocks
88	Gail - Match Maker
92	Tale of the Red-tailed Squirrels
93	Note to Myself
94	Floating Between Worlds
95	Spiritual Journey

98 Sea the World
100 Scouting
102 Beliefs
104 Busy Bee
105 Hitchhiking Veteran
107 It's A Dog's Life
114 Reflections
118 Ancestors
121 Slave Master
123 Lum
126 85
127 Cousins

129 Appendix

Forward

I have consolidated herein a hodgepodge of articles, stories, photos, and notes of an autobiographical nature that I have created over the years. I never considered myself a writer, even though I have many brilliant thoughts and vivid memories to share. I hate the thought that they will all be lost, but they will. Perhaps this will slow the process a bit.

Thank you, brother John Alan Nicolay, accomplished author and publisher in his own right, for the idea of publishing my stories and helping make it happen.
I also thank you in advance for distributing hard cover copies to family and friends after I have crossed the rainbow bridge and rejoined my place in the cosmos.

Our retirement community, Buena Vida Estates, writing group, Write Your Life, under the leadership of mentor and teacher Linda Jump, has provided the encouragement and support to create much of the content published here. Linda's nonjudgmental, quiet style meshes perfectly with my needs.

Without the support of my wife, Mary, this endeavor would not have happened. She suggested that I substitute for her in the writing group. I was reluctant at first. She has reviewed my drafts and made constructive suggestions.

I also had a little help from newer writing tools including spelling, grammar, and minor structure review. Some of the non-photograph illustrations were AI created.

Autobiography

Hugh Crawford Nicolay

Roots

I was born on April 5, 1941, in Detroit, Michigan. I was the oldest of three children born to Raymond Edwin Nicolay (1915-1978) and Virginia Jesse Ann Crawford (1915-1968).

Boyhood

My boyhood home was the small town of Monroe, Michigan, located on the western shore of Lake Erie between Detroit, Michigan, and Toledo, Ohio. I was active in the Boy Scouts, DeMolay, and the high school photography staff. At 17, my family moved to Daytona Beach, Florida, where I finished high school at Mainland High School in 1959.

Military

After high school, I enlisted in the US Navy for four years. I was stationed aboard two destroyers home-ported at Mayport Naval Base near Jacksonville, Florida. They were the USS Jonas Ingram DD-938 and USS Power DD-839. I was an Interior Communications Electrician Second Class, IC2, when I was discharged in 1963. During my four years in the Navy, I visited ports along the east coast of the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. My ships also took extended cruises to the British Isles, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Indian Ocean.

College

After military service, I returned home to Daytona Beach, attended Daytona Beach Community College for two years, and completed the requirements for an Associate of Science degree in 1965.
I then transferred to the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. I received my Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering with Honors in 1967. I continued my education at UF and obtained a Master's in engineering in 1969. While in Gainesville, I lived at the Cooperative Living Organization (CLO) and served as President during the summer of my senior year. While a student, I joined the Veterans Club and Young Democrats.

Work

I worked at a lumber yard during high school, but mainly for my father, usually without pay. I clerked at various ABC Liquor stores in Daytona Beach during my early college years. The summer between my freshman and sophomore years, I interned at the US Naval Underwater Sound Reference Laboratory in Orlando. My work was a made-up drafting position. After college, I joined Harris Semiconductor in Palm Bay, Florida, as an R&D engineer. I retired in 1996 after 27 years of employment.

My work involved developing and characterizing new advanced wafer fabrication processes and semiconductor devices (transistors, resistors, diodes, etc.). The new processes enabled technology for new semiconductor integrated circuit products or "microchips." I accepted leadership positions but found my years applying statistical methods to the design, execution, and analysis of experiments most satisfying.

I am the inventor or co-inventor of 13 patents and have published several technical papers.

Community

Conservation and the environment have been the focus of my civic involvement. I served as President of our local Audubon Society, the Indian River Audubon Society (now Space Coast Audubon Society), for four years and was director of the Florida Audubon Society. I have been particularly interested in conserving the St. Johns River in Florida.
I have served on several boards and committees, including the St. Johns River Land Management and Recreation Advisory Council for the St Johns River Water Management District, the Town of Melbourne Beach Code Enforcement Board, Melbourne Village P&Z, Melbourne Village Financial, Melbourne Village Town Review Board, American Homesteading Board of Trustees, AHF Parks and Paths, AHF Information, and West Melbourne Board of Adjustment. In addition, I volunteered weekly at Daily Bread, our local "soup kitchen."

Interests

I have many interests, but I don't consider myself an expert in any of them. They include bird watching, natural history, travel and cultural history, family history and genealogy, maps and GPS, computer applications, photography, technology, and science.

My wife and I enjoyed traveling in our Roadtrek RV. We have traveled to all 50 US states, Canada, Mexico, Europe, Central and South America, Australia, New Zealand, and Southern Africa. We have also participated in several Road Scholar programs and taken many small ship cruises.

Trivia

My great-great uncle John George Nicolay was President Abraham Lincoln's personal secretary.

Charleston Heston once came to our house for dinner.

I took a ten-day raft trip on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon.

I visited the Galapagos Islands twice and spent one night camping near a steam vent inside the crater of Alcedo Volcano.

My wife and I traveled in a small camping van for three months in Southern Africa.

I quit smoking after 37 years.

My first car was a 1950 Ford.

I attended a one-room country schoolhouse for the first grade. The building still stands on Stein Road in LaSalle, Michigan.

When I was 16, our family lived in the caretaker's apartment above a rural funeral home.

I may be related to George Washington. His grandmother’s second husband was the brother of an ancestor, but not proven.

My Family

I live with by my loving and caring wife of 33+ years, Mary Whaling Nicolay, at Buena Vida Estates CCRC in West Melbourne, Florida; a brother John A. Nicolay, of Unionville, Virginia, a sister, Carol L. Nicolay Thompson, of South

Daytona, Florida; two grandchildren, Jessie K. Schneider-Barnes and Margaret M. Schneider, A nephew, Steven Thompson, a niece, Kayla J. Nicolay, a nephew, Cole A. Nicolay, and a great grandson Beau Lee Barnes.

My Profile

Hugh Crawford Nicolay
Born April 5, 1941,
Grace Hospital, Detroit, Michigan

Places Lived
Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan
LaSalle, Eire, Monroe, Monroe County, Michigan
Holly Hill, Daytona Beach, South Daytona, Volusia County, Florida
Gainesville, Florida,
Melbourne, Melbourne Village, Melbourne Beach, West Melbourne, Brevard County, Florida

Family
Brother John A Nicolay, Unionville, VA
Sister Carol Lynn Thomson, South Daytona, FL
Spouse Mary Burleigh Whaling Nicolay
Stepson John Knoke, Melbourne Beach, FL
Stepdaughter Anna Schneider, Melbourne Village, FL
Step-granddaughter Jessie Schneider-Barnes, Melbourne Beach, FL
Step-granddaughter Margaret Schneider, Denver, CO
Step-great-grandson Beau Lee Barnes, Melbourne Beach, FL

Schools attended
Hall School, LaSalle, Michigan (1)
Boyd Elementary, Monroe, Michigan (2,3,4)
Guyton Elementary, Detroit, Michigan (5)
Custer Consolidated, Monroe, Michigan (6,7, 8)
Cantrell Jr. HS, Monroe, Michigan (9)
Monroe HS, Monroe, MI (10, 11)
Mainland HS, Daytona Beach, FL (12)
Daytona Beach Jr College, Daytona Beach, FL (13, 14)
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL (BS, MS) Electrical Engineering, Solid State Physics
University of Tennessee, TN (post grad), Statistical Process Control, Design of Experiments

Brevard Jr College, Palm Bay, FL (post grad) GIS Geographic Information Systems, GPS Geographic Positioning Systems

Military
US Navy (4 yrs) Interior Communications Electrician, 2nd Class, IC2
USNTC, US Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, IL
USS Jonas Ingram, DD-938, Mayport, FL
USS Power, DD-839, Mayport, FL

Employment
US Naval Underwater Sound Reference Lab, Orlando, FL (summer 1964)
ABC Liquor Stores, Daytona Beach, FL - part-time college support
Harris Corp., Semiconductor Div., Palm Bay, FL, Process Development Device Engineer R&D (1969-96)

Interests/Activities
Technology
Family History Genealogy
Photography
Bird Watching, Natural History
History
Travel
Politics Current Events
Flight Simulators, Virtual Tourism
Computer User Interfaces
Getting Organized
Reading Learning Writing

Collections
Coffee mugs (gone)
Matchbook covers (gone)
Ball-point pens travel souvenirs (gone)
Lapel pins travel souvenirs
Small boxes

Favorites
Movies - Airplane, Blazing Saddles, Russians Are Coming, Planes, Trains, Automobiles
TV - The Simpsons, PBS Nature, Nova, Sunday Morning, Antiques Roadshow, Frontline
Music - most up to 1980, Peter, Paul, and Mary, The Eagles
Food - chicken & dumplings, pizza with pepperoni and mushrooms, BLT, PB&J
Travel - Southern Africa, Grand Canyon, Colorado River White Water Rafting, Galapagos, 50 USA states, 40countries, 1 planet, 1 galaxy
Books Authors - A Sand County Almanac, Look Homeward Angel, Cry Beloved Country, Lee Childs (Reacher), Carl Hiaasen, Nelson DeMille (The Panther), Michener

Organizations over the years
Boy Scouts, DeMolay, Audubon, Sierra Club, Florida Trail Assoc, South Brevard Historical Society, Florida Native Plants, The Nature Conservancy TNC, ACLU, UUA

Spiritually
Unitarian Humanist Agnostic Buda Naturalist

Pets
Lady, Springer Spaniel
Nicki, Cocker Spaniel
Lady, Cavalier King Charles Spaniel
Katie, CKCS

Games Sports - UF teams

Places I Have Lived

Mom wrote that she lived in Detroit at 1196 Eastlawn, 1940-41, and 4624 Bewick, 1941-45. I am not sure which address was my birth home; I don't remember either of them. The Eastlawn Street address was an empty lot in 2017, but there was a house on Bewick in 2017.

15074 S. Telegraph Road, Monroe, MI (Potato Warehouse) (preschool).
Dad's Uncle Nick (Ernest Nicolay) owned a half-interest in Detroit's New Era Potato Chip Company. The company had a potato warehouse in Monroe. We moved there from Detroit and lived in a small attached apartment. I would guess that Dad was a caretaker. He also operated a welding fabrication shop in a Quonset hut on the property, which still stands today. He made items for the potato chip company, including small carts using aircraft tires.

I remember the smell of rotting potatoes, the freight trains that came close to the back of the building, and sometimes a wheel bearing would catch on fire. I found that scary. Brother John was born while we lived there. We had dogs that got run over on the busy Telegraph Highway. There was a story of the police bringing me home after I was picked up after being discovered riding my tricycle naked on the highway.

LaSalle, MI (K, 1st grade)

Johnson House. I think this was the first of three places we lived in LaSalle. It is located on the SW corner of Telegraph and Stein Rd. I think I started school while living here. I remember standing before the kitchen stove oven on a cold morning. Dad moved his welding shop to a shed on the lot.

Store Building. The store building home was unique. Dad divided up the open interior into cubicles for sleeping. The living area was in the front and kitchen area and bathroom in the rear. I remember having the mumps. Grandpa and Grandma Nicolay and Wilma joined us living in

the small building after they moved from Kansas. Grandpa had to sell his farm to the government to make way for a dam built on Dragoon Creek. I think maybe Grandpa used his money to buy acreage at this location in LaSalle and with dad started the Nicolay Construction Company. Carol was born while we lived in the store building. Not long after, mom went into the TB sanatorium, John went to live with Uncle Ted and was Aunt Marie in Illinois, Carol with Aunt Helen in Detroit. I stayed with Grandma Nicolay in LaSalle.

Little White House Stein Rd. Nicolay Construction initially got into the business of building 'pre fabs'. The local builder built the foundation and the house came on a truck largely pre assembled. The were all alike except perhaps for some finish details. Two houses were first built in LaSalle. One on Telegraph Road just south of the store building. Another was on Stein Road just behind the store building. All eight of us moved into the little Stein Road house. I remember going to school. I remember wash tubs in the rear. I remember a Murphy Bed in the front room.

214 Bentley Dr., Monroe, MI (2nd, 3rd, 4th grades)

Dad and grandpa built 7 little pre fabs on Bentley Dr.. We moved into the first one. I have better memories by this point. The neighborhood boys hung out by the Raisin River. We caught fish, fried them over a campfire and lived to tell about. The river was about as polluted as industrial towns could make them. We really didn't want to swim in the water. From time to time we tried to build a raft. One of our favorite activities was walking the big roads looking for cigarette butts. Sometimes we got enough money together to send one of the gang to the store to buy a pack 'for their dad.' I learned to ride a bike. I want to remember I bought it myself for $5. We had a small wall at the edge of the yard and sidewalk which I used to mount the bike. I rode to the end of the block and then had to walk back home and do it again as I couldn't turn around. There was a big paper mill on the next block behind the house. One time it caught on fire. Big scary fire. I joined cub scouts. I think the pack met at the church. I don't remember den meetings. The school bus stopped right in front of the house. The driver was Mr. Ford. If the kids got out of hand, he would just stop the bus and wait. In the mornings I could look out a window and see the bus cross the railroad tracks some

distance away. Towards the end we had a high school girl live with us. I think she was to help mom who slept a lot. I think it was with her parents that John and Carol lived a year later when mom went back to the sanitarium in Howell. We (I) had a wonderful dog named Lady. She was a Springer Spaniel; my boyhood dog. Dad got her in Findlay, Ohio for hunting pheasants. Dogs ran loose a lot in those days. Lady was hit by a car right in front of me. That memory is stuck in my head. When dad came home I ran out to tell him. His response was something like .. oh heck, and hunting season starts tomorrow.

620 Marlborough, Detroit, MI – Fifth Grade, Age 10/11

That year, Mom returned to the TB sanatorium in Howell, Michigan. Brother John and Sister Carol stayed with a family friend while I went to Detroit to live with Aunt Helen and Uncle Dan Pierron, their four boys, and Helen's mother, my great grandmother. Helen was my Dad's aunt and Grandpa Nicolay's youngest sister. Dad had lived with her before he married, and Carol had stayed there as an infant another time when mom was in the sanatorium.

Looking back, it was a year full of unique experiences that enriched my 11 year old young life.

The house stood on a brick-paved street where cars rumbled past. An actual alley ran behind it. The home had four levels. The basement was unfinished, full of stored things, and just a little spooky. The laundry must have been there because there was a clothes chute from the bedroom level for dirty laundry. Dress clothes were sent out by Aunt Helen for cleaning and came back heavily starched.

Other home deliveries were common then—ice, milk, groceries, coal, and vegetables. In 1952, some of the carts were still horse-drawn. The basement had a coal-fired furnace with an automatic feeder, so no one had to shovel coal. Coal was delivered via a chute through the basement window into the coal bin. Steam radiators heated the rooms. There was also a small workbench in the furnace room that I was allowed to use.

The main floor held the living room, dining area, kitchen, and Great Grandma Nicolay's bedroom and bath. She had a shower, which we could use. The kitchen

still had a real icebox. The iceman brought a block of ice to the back porch and put it in the box from outside and the milkman delivered bottles the same way. Milk wasn't homogenized then, so the cream rose to the top. Whoever opened a new bottle had to try and carefully pour most of the cream into a separate container.

Upstairs was the bedroom level. The one bathroom had a large old-fashioned bathtub, a pedestal sink, and little square white tiles.

There were four bedrooms: the southeast room belonged to the maid, Hortense, who had her own outside stairway. She handled laundry, ironing, cleaning, and some cooking. The small front bedroom seemed to be for guests—people came and went, though I can't recall exactly who they were. Aunt Helen and Uncle Dan had a large bedroom; ours was a small back room with bunk beds. We had to walk through their room and by a large walk-in closet to reach it.

The attic was unfinished initially, but by year's end, eldest son Dan and his new wife, Elise, had turned it into an apartment. Second son Dick wasn't living at home. The third son, Paul, was finishing high school. Fourth son Frank was a couple of years older than me; we sometimes did things together. I mostly played with a boy down the street who was my age—an only child, and as I remember,. spoiled. His basement was full of fancy toys, but I was rarely allowed inside. We usually played 'army' in his sandbox or pretended his porch was an airplane cockpit. Baseball card collecting was the big neighborhood fad, though I didn't know much about the players. I once went to the Goebel Brewery Stadium to see the Detroit Tigers.

Everyone in the household had traditional roles. Uncle Dan worked an 8-to-5 white-collar job and was quiet and reserved. Aunt Helen ran the household with a gentle but sure hand.

Great Grandma Nicolay mostly stayed in her downstairs room, as she was hard of hearing and had trouble walking. She listened to the radio—especially "The Breakfast Club" with Don McNeil. She kept a canary, and liked hard toast, which she made herself. She was always cold, with an electric heater running and a shawl wrapped around her shoulders. Later in life, when I learned more about the

Nicolay family history, I realized how remarkable she was. At the time, she was simply an old lady to my eleven-year-old self.

Uncle Dan gave me a weekly allowance—the only time in my life I received one. Every Saturday morning, I'd find thirty-five cents on his dresser, enough for the Saturday matinee and a dime for a soft drink or doughnut. Sometimes I saved for something big, like a one-dollar model airplane kit from a hobby shop nearby. The older Pierron boys had an impressive collection of models they had built, and I wished I could match them.

The movie theater was some distance south on Jefferson. Streetcars ran there, but we usually walked. A Saturday matinee meant cartoons, serials, and a feature film. My favorite was "Hopalong Cassidy." I missed the movies about once a month when Dad came to take me to visit Mom. Early on, she could only wave from her window. Later, we met in a visiting room, separated by glass.

I took piano lessons weekly. I wanted to learn but wasn't enthusiastic about practicing. I also continued in Cub Scouts—I remember the den meetings more than the pack meetings. On meeting days, I wore my uniform to school; boys liked uniforms for some reason.

I think I had a bicycle, but Aunt Helen probably kept us close to home. My chores included washing lunch dishes and setting the dinner table. Each family member had a personal napkin ring, which I thought was neat. Dinner was always a significant family event, often ending with stories or riddles.

School was only a block away. In fifth grade, I struggled with math until we discovered I couldn't see the blackboard from the back of the class. From then on, I wore glasses.

That year changed my life.

<u>14470 South Dixie Hwy, Monroe MI (6th, 7th, 8th, 9th grade)</u>

Dad built this house while mom was in the sanitarium and I lived with Aunt Helen. It was by far the nicest house we ever had before or after. We lived there for four years.

Dad was very proud of it. He had arrived. We had a big open house and invited all the Detroit relatives including Uncle Nick the potato chip uncle. The event was on my 12th birthday and I felt put out because the day was suppose to be about me, not the house. Uncle Nick gave me a silver dollar.

The house was located on 4 acres on South Dixie Hwy in the country. There were neighbors on either side but not across the road. There was nowhere to walk or ride a bike. There were no other kids my age to hang with. I rode the bus to and from school. Mom was driving by this time and us kids were dependent on her or dad to get us to town.

The property had a few old neglected apple trees in the back yard. I once picked a few bushel and tried to sell them as cooking apples. No sale. The front yard had a nice productive cherry tree. I remember that dad never landscaped the front yard. It was just dirt and weeds. He also didn't cover the septic drain field in the rear until the neighbors complained about the smell. We lucked out when a local nursery offered to plant the area around the front for free in turn for photographs for their catalog. The front was decorative sandstone veneer and several planters which showed well. The rest of the yard remained dirt and weeds.

The house was ranch style. There were 3 bedrooms and a shared bathroom on one end connected by a long hall. Seems strange now that the master bedroom didn't have a private bath. Dad added a small office for himself but he never used it. Our one telephone was located there. Now we have five phones in our small apartment plus our two cells. There was a large formal living room with big sandstone

fireplace which showed through a big ‘picture window.’ There was a formal dining room which we used on Sundays when grandma and grandpa Crawford visited. The kitchen area include a built-in din-net and the wash machine. Next was a large family room where the old TV was located. There was another bathroom. It was not fancy. A place to wash off the mud. The house ended with a large two car garage and concrete drive. Dad quickly filled it with building materials and his stuff. There soon was also piles of old reclaimed lumber in the back yard.

While we lived here I was active in boy scouts. I got my poultry raising merit badge. Dad bought 50 hatchlings which we first raised in the attic over the garage for couple of weeks. Dad built nice chicken coop at the rear of the property which became their home until Sunday chicken dinners depleted the stock. It was my job to chop off their heads and pull their feathers. Mom would clean, cut up and fry them. We kept a few egg layers for a while. Some of the chickens became pets. They lived the longest.

During these times dad bought a new station wagon and came to own a boat, an indoor cabin cruiser which he kept at the Monroe Yacht Club where he hung out a lot at the bar. Mom didn’t care for the drinking boating lifestyle. Before long, dad’s money woes caught up with him and he lost the house and boat and we had to move.

<u>111 Neighbor Rd., Monroe, MI (10th grade)</u>

This house was new. Not sure how we came to move there. Perhaps dad had built it and bank was yet to catch up. It was built as a duplex but dad removed some walls to make it a single family house. It was located on a short dirt road about five miles north of town. It was also located between two drive-in theaters. We could see the screen of one of them out the bedroom windows. We had old undependable junk cars so getting to town was a problem. I remember walking a time or two. We were getting poor fast but somehow I keep up with scouts and DeMolay. I remember using the utility room as a dark room.

9156 Suder Ave., Erie, MI (Funeral Home, 11th grade)

Our last year in Michigan. Dad was off to Florida to get rich and then send for us. I think he went off with one of his drinking buddies, the man's wife and two small girls. Before leaving he set us up as caretakers of a rural funeral home in Eire about ten miles from Monroe. It was an old two story farm house without any outbuildings located far from neighbors. The school bus picked us up. Transportation was always a problem so we were pretty isolated. I think mom tried to work in the Monroe High School cafeteria but it didn't work out. We went on welfare. I guess we lived rent free in exchange for taking care of the property. Mom did the inside cleaning and I sometimes raked leaves around the outside.

We lived on the second flood. The big downstairs was used for funerals, but there were only a couple. It was a bit spooky coming home at night and having to go through the downstairs room with casket and dash up the stairs. The embalming took place elsewhere but there was some old equipment in the basement.

One time dad came back from Florida to visit. He found he could travel for free by answering newspaper ads for Florida snowbirds looking for someone to drive their cars north or south while they took a plane or train.

11th Street, Holly Hill, FL

In the early summer of 1958 we were off to Daytona Beach. At the time, for me, it was a big adventure. I got to drive from Michigan to Florida. For a 17 year old boy it was a big deal. We drove an old car that belonged to dad's Florida friend. I put all the money I had saved and some of Uncle Bob's money getting it trip worthy. We packed some clothes and the four of us in the car. We spent one layover day a mom's aunt at Nine Mile just east of Alcoa Tenn. The next day we drove the rest of the way.
Whatever other possessions we had were stored in LaSalle in Grandpa's garage. Sometime later in the year Grandpa shipped some things to us. I remember never seeing again my shotgun and some little wood carvings that Grandma Crawford had purchased for me on her travels. I managed to save some boy scout and DeMolay memories and a few pictures. Mom got her wedding silverware, photo album, bible and some linens. Not much really. Looking back, mom left family

and friends, her parents, cousins, childhood friends, church friends all to follow her husband to a place where she knew no one.
We arrived just at nightfall. Dad drove us down to the beach. It was the first time I had seen the Atlantic Ocean. For a short time with lived in an old farm house with this other family. It was hot and humid. I was quickly bored. I remember walking to the beach, several miles. I remember dad asking mom to call her dad to borrow money. All of us were sitting around the table while mom made her plea. How degrading that must have been. Dad had been in Florida almost a year and couldn't afford to pay the rent for his family.

541 1/2 Live Oak, Daytona Beach, FL

By the time school started we moved into a second floor apartment over an old couple who owned the house. It was not in a good neighborhood, only a couple of houses from 'colored town.' I could walk to school, probably ten blocks. Mom got a job as short order cook at McCrory's Department store on Beach St downtown. I think she made $35 per week. I made some effort trying to find an after school job but was unsuccessful.

262 Daytona Ave. Holly Hill

138 Highland Ave

I lived most of my high school senior year at these two addresses, but I have little specific memory of the details of the houses. When I came home on leave while in the Navy it must have been the Highland house I stayed in but I can't picture the inside or outside.

USNTC Great Lakes, IL (195960)

In August 1959 I moved to Great Lakes. My boot camp digs were a relatively new building. My company of 50 or so all slept in the same room in bunk beds. The was a smoking break room usually locked. Offices with glass windows, shower, head and place to scrub clothes.
After boot camp I moved to school dorm. I think I had a double room, but I can't picture it.

USS Jonas Ingram DD938, Mayport, FL (1960-62)

This was a new ship with air conditioning. Bunks were three high. I got a bottom one about 6 inches off the deck which was hard to get into but darker and more private. Lockers were nearby, three high, maybe 30 inch cube. Somewhere was hanging space for pea coats.

USS Power, DD839, Mayport, FL (1962-63)

The last year of my four year tour was on another older ship. No AC. Bunks where again three high. I got a middle one. Storage was in foot lockers under the bottom bunk. If someone was in the bottom bunk, one could not access their locker. It was hot. I found a fan and wired it pointing at my bunk. Sometimes we slept out on deck. Very uncomfortable but a bit cooler.

Roberta Rd., Ormond Beach, FL

609 Tomoka Rd., Daytona Beach, FL

Family lived at these addresses while I was in the Navy. I have a little memory of either one..

841 White St., Daytona Beach, FL (Jr college)

After the Navy I moved back to Daytona to attend Jr. College. This house was not bad. I think it was in foreclosure so we lived rent free I bet. I think John moved out about this time. Dad was in and out.
Funny how I just assumed I could move back home after the Navy. I don't remember paying rent. Mom probably did my laundry and cooked dinner. I worked part time at various ABC Liquor stores, ($1.25/hour). I had my own car and paid my school and personal bills. Mom had a little dog, Manchester terrier, but it would sneak out and run blocks away. I remember looking for it and usually, I guess, it was always found.
I think I went off to Gainesville and UF while the family continued to live here.

1440 Audrey Dr, Daytona Beach, FL

I have a little memory of this place. I must have come back from Gainesville to visit. I don't think mom and Carol lived here long. Mom finally left dad and she and Carol moved to Volusia Ave. Dad lingered there a bit longer. I think the police took the house and his car and all his possessions in the house. He told the story that his lost stuff included his dad's pocket watch. I think he became more or less homeless.

942 1/2 Volusia Ave., Daytona Beach, FL

I remember overnighting many times on the pull out sofa in the living room. Mom and Carol shared the one bedroom. I remember getting another old B&W TV at the used store. I remember the hard time mom had climbing the stairs. I remember being there when a telegram came from Grandpa C telling mom that her stepmother had died. I remember a silly framed picture of still life fruit,

probably from a calendar, that hung in the kitchen. I have it hanging over my desk.

Carol married Bert and they rented the apartment nextdoor. Sometime later they rented a house in South Daytona and took mom with them. It was the last place mom lived. I am grateful Carol and Bert gave mom such good and compassionate care.

117 NW 15th St., Gainesville, FL (CLO) Jr & Senior year

I have written my CLO story separately which is included herein.

3001 NW 14 St., Apt 6, Gainesville, FL (1st year grad school)

CLO buddy Larry Berkowitz and I moved out of CLO during my and his first year of graduate school. Our one bedroom apartment was new and comfortable. Simple and adequate. We were on the second of two floors, maybe 8 apartments total. Larry had a cat and a parakeet. I spent most of my time in my research lab office space on campus where I had a desk with other grad students. After one year Larry went to the Univ of Michigan.

2000 SW 16th Ave, Williamsburg Apts, Apt 126, Gainesville, FL (2nd year grad school)

This was a neat small apartment close to campus. It was in a large complex of colonial design. I liked the pool. Mine was a small one bedroom on the lower level. Above me was a larger unit on two floors, townhouse layout. Out my backdoor was a cow pasture. I liked sitting out. I remember buying my first color TV so I could watch the moon landing. I finished my thesis and got my MSE. College was finished after six calendar years (7 academic years) but bummer, no job.

1524 NW 4th Ave., Apt 0, Gainesville, FL (few months Fall 1969)

My Williamsburg lease was up and I had no job. I don't remember how it came about but from late August to mid November I slept on a friend's couch. All my stuff was in boxes (mostly text books). I interviewed and got an offer from Sperry Rand in

Huntsville and Radiation Microelectronics in Melbourne. I didn't like the Sperry job or location or the Melbourne location, but the job offer was exactly what I thought I wanted. So I moved in November 1969 to Melbourne.

1401 Ashley Ct., Southgate Apt 203H, Melbourne, FL
S. Babcock, Southgate Apt 103, Melbourne, FL

There weren't a lot of options for apartments in Melbourne. Williamsburg beachside seemed to be the nicest but there were no open apartments.The only place I could find was a second floor studio furnished at Southgate. Turns out it was a good choice. Very sturdy quiet construction. Only 10 minutes from work. Sometimes I could go home for lunch and take a dip in the pool. One of the first things I did was build a Heath-kit stereo. I also got a couple of tropical fish aquariums.
After a year or so a one bedroom ground level apartment became available. It was unfurnished. I bought cheap furniture and built a dining table out of a door.
It was during my Southgate years, maybe four, that I became involved in Audubon and other community issues.

6265 Savannah, Melbourne Village, FL (197475)

In 1974 or so, FIT across the street from Southgate, bought our complex to incorporate it into their campus housing. We all had to move on pretty short notice. I went house hunting. With my renewed nature outdoors interest I wanted to find a home that had some woody feel. Even finding a house with a back porch or patio was a challenge. I knew about Melbourne Village and it was ideal but there was nothing that interested me. I remember looking at two houses with very strange floor plans. Many of the homes in the village were built as small retirement cottages then expanded in a hodgepodge fashion. I made offers on two houses outside the village but both were turned down. One was in an older part of town with mature trees. The other one had a narrow but deep lot that backed up on a creek (more a ditch) but it had a small pool.
All I could find was a rental home in Melbourne Village. The owner was an engineer who moved to California and though he might return to the area. It too was a strange house, but I had fun messing around in the yard.

6205 Ward Parkway, Melbourne Village, FL (1975-92)

In 1975 I saw a for sale sign on this house not a block from where I was renting. I looked at it, made an offer for what they were asking and it became my first owned home. I think it was $39k. My mortgage rate was high, maybe 8 1/2 %. It was a bit strange in many regards. No AC, no garage or carport. It was built as a one bedroom one bath with carport. The carport was enclosed but the floor stepped down about six inches from the rest of the house and then sloped to the entrance which had been closed of with sliding glass doors. The whole main part of the house connected to a big screened in porch with sliding glass doors. There was no back yard to speak of. The interior was mostly wood paneling. There were planters in the living area but it was too dark to grow anything. The one bath was all pink tile and fixtures. The outside wall was glass block with a narrow planter along it length. I added dirt and plants but they always grew towards the light. One of the first things I did was replace the red carpet and red drapes with brown carpet and brown drapes. I added window AC units and ceiling fans in the living room and dining area. I built shelving divider over the planter between the living and dining area where I located my aquariums.

I updated the kitchen and repainted the green cabinets off white and put roll linoleum over the terrazzo floor. At some point I took the big planter out and replaced it with a free standing fireplace. I hired a contractor to level the old carport floor and drywall the walls. Not long after I had him build a two car garage after my expensive Datsun 280 Z rusted away sitting in the yard. He also replaced my front door with the door knob in the middle with a more conventional door. I spent a lot of time raking pine needles. I added a fish pond and planted trees.

When Mary and I married I sold by owner to an older lady renting not far away for $63k which was about break even after adding up the improvements. I liked the house for it's unique features but I was not emotionally attached. I guess I moved so often that houses were just places to keep the rain off.

<u>407 Coral Ave., Melbourne Beach, FL(1992-2008)</u>

Mary and I married in late 1992 and I moved into her house beachside. It too had an interesting layout, a tri-level. Mary made me feel right at home. I took over the lower level den/bedroom as my man cave. Mary and family moved to Florida in mid 1970s. Mary had made many changes and improvements and we made more during the 15 years that we lived there together. The town of Melbourne

Beach had a long history and sense of community. I joined the environmental advisory board and code enforcement board.
As for the house, we expanded the back deck and added a hot tub. I spent many evenings watching the stars from the tub. The new sprinkler system spurred the grass and trees to grow. A nice fish pond was a fun feature. We had many birds attracted to the tropical growth in the back yard. Inside we updated the kitchen a bit, put in laminate floors throughout the lower levels, remodeled the upstairs bath, replaced the sliding glass doors to the deck with french doors and added new paint and french doors to the family room. We divided off part of the garage as an air conditioned hobby room.
After too many hurricanes and evacuations, we wanted to move off the beach.

582 Acacia Ave., Melbourne Village, FL (2008-2016)

We had been watching for homes in Melbourne Village for several years. Anna and family moved there sometime after I left. Generally, the houses for sale were small, needed serious updating, or had some issue or another. I really didn't want a major renovation but we definitely liked Melbourne Village for its nature. Over the years we knew many people who lived there. It seemed to have and attraction for movers and shakers in the larger community.
When Anna told us about the Acacia house, we jumped right on it. The transition was relatively smooth. We paid $309 and added another $50k in upgrades including a gut job on the kitchen, laminate floors throughout, new paint, another hot tub, electric dog fence, and a fish pond. Our big project was landscaping with mostly native plants. The lot was small for Melbourne Village, 100x150. We didn't want to see our neighbors and we wanted birds and wildlife. It took a few years but we achieved our goal.

2129 W New Haven Ave., Buena Vida Estates, Apt 1107, W Melbourne, FL (2016)

Sometime after our 70th birthdays we began thinking about where we would live next, out last move, our exit plan. We had friends who had moved into a CCRC, Continuing Care Retirement Community. Being planners, we liked the idea. We visited Oak Hammock in Gainesville. We love the area for nature and history. Being near the University would be another bonus. We visited John Knox in Orange City several times. We liked the idea of living in a small duplex with a garden, patio, bird feeder and privacy and maybe a nice view. But in the end we realized we did not want to move away from family and friends in Melbourne. We had both lived here for 40+ years. So we made a deposit for Buena Vida Estates not a half mile from Melbourne Village. We were specific as to which apartment we wanted ground floor facing the little woods. We were prepared to wait a couple of years. But within six months an apartment became available. We put the Acacia house on the market 'for sale by owner' at $319k. We kept cutting the price and finally sold at $241k, a lot less than what we paid for it. But one could argue it was all just on paper money as our real out of pocket cost was what we paid for the Coral Ave and Ward Pkwy houses plus improvements. On the other hand, the move-in BVE cost exceeded the Acacia net return and that was real money.

We made some upgrades to our BVE apartment. We replaced the carpet with laminate wood, added three updated ceiling fans, replaced the electrical switches and outlets, replaced the window treatments and gave it a personalized paint job.

We are both quite happy with our decision and our life style. No more moves.

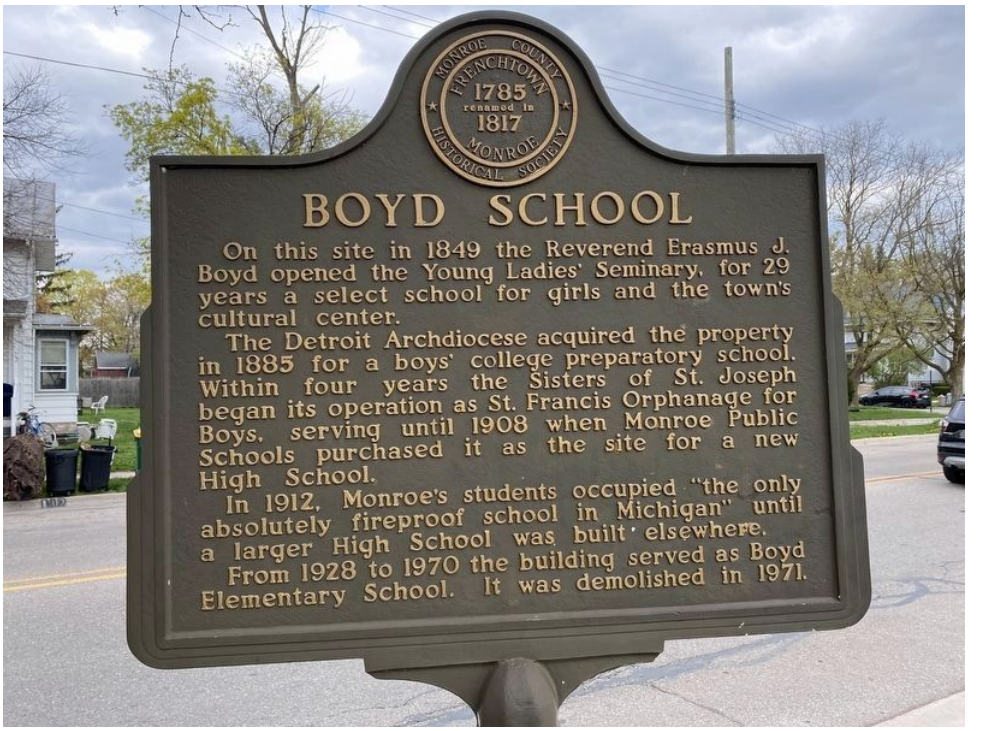
Schools I Attended

HALL SCHOOL STEIN ROAD LA SALLE MI

I first attended a one-room school on Stein Road in La Salle. It was a short walk, a quarter mile. I attended 1st grade. I am trying to remember if it had kindergarten. My teacher was Mrs. Hendrix She had a son about my age, and we often played around their farm property. She lived in an old two-story, spooky wood farmhouse across the street from us.

The school building is now a private residence.

BOYD ELEMENTARY MONROE, MI


MONROE COUNTY
FRENCHTOWN
1785
renamed in
1817
MONROE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOYD SCHOOL
On this site in 1849 the Reverend Erasmus J. Boyd opened the Young Ladies' Seminary, for 29 years a select school for girls and the town's cultural center.
The Detroit Archdiocese acquired the property in 1885 for a boys' college preparatory school. Within four years the Sisters of St. Joseph began its operation as St. Francis Orphanage for Boys, serving until 1908 when Monroe Public Schools purchased it as the site for a new High School.
In 1912, Monroe's students occupied "the only absolutely fireproof school in Michigan" until a larger High School was built elsewhere.
From 1928 to 1970 the building served as Boyd Elementary School. It was demolished in 1971.

After we moved from LaSalle to Bentley Drive in Monroe, I attended Boyd Elementary School. I participate in 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades. Boyd was a classic 1950s school. I didn't know it then, but it was a school with a lot of history. I have warm memories of those days. I remember boys played marbles in the dirt. The teacher had a drawer full of marbles she had confiscated. I rode a school bus to and from school. I saved several of my report cards. I was good at math and drawing, but could have improved my reading and spelling. I could have been more social. (I haven't changed much), The school site is now a park.

GUYTON ELEMENTARY DETROIT, MI

For 5th grade, I lived with my great Aunt Helen in Detroit while my mother was in a TB sanitarium. I attended Guyton Public Elementary School, just two blocks down the street. I remember I was a Cub Scout and wore my uniform one day a week. I remember I could have done better in math. Then we figured out I couldn't see the board. It was then that I got my first pair of glasses. The building was closed in 2009. It is for sale.

CUSTER CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL MONROE, MI

In Monroe, I attended Custer Consolidated School from 5th through 8th grades. During this time, we lived on South Dixie Highway. The old one-room schools were closed, and students were bused to the consolidated school. I could see the school across a field from our house, yet I was required to ride a bus. That was OK in the morning, as I was the next-to-last stop on the route. It was not so OK in the afternoon, as I was the next-to-last stop on an hour-plus route. I could have walked home in ten minutes, but we couldn't do that.

My favorite class was wood shop. My classmates made cutting boards and bowling pin lamps, and I made a large Christmas sleigh and reindeer for a front yard holiday display.

CANTRICK JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL MONROE, MI

For 9th grade, while living on S. Dixie, I rode a school bus to Cantrick Junior High School, a 7th to 9th grade school. I remember going out for football, which I thought I could do as a chubby kid. I got cut on the first round of tryouts, and thus, my sports career came to an early end. I did join the rifle team. We shot at paper targets in the school basement. I remember liking science class, particularly

astrometry, and weather. I borrowed a neat 35mm camera, an Argus C3. After becoming a middle school, it was closed in 2008.

MONROE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL MONROE, MI

It was off to the big high school in Monroe for 10th and 11th grades. We had moved to Neighbor Road, north of town. We were in another high school district, but I wanted to attend school with the same kids I had been with for nine grades. I used my grandparents' address to attend MHS. I had to be creative with transportation. I could drive by then, but we often didn't have cars running. I either drove, mom picked me up, or I walked the four miles home after school. It was during these two years that I joined the school photography staff. We had homeroom to ourselves. We took photos for the school newspaper and yearbook. I liked getting out of class to take pictures. We had to develop and print our photos.

For my 11th year, we moved again, this time to the funeral home in Eire. I was legally in the school district and could ride the bus, but it was a long way out in the country. We had old, undependable cars, so I was isolated. The old high school building is now a middle school.

MAINLAND HIGH SCHOOL DAYTONA BEACH, FL

I finished high school at Mainland High in Daytona Beach, Florida. We had moved from Michigan to Florida during the summer of 1957. We lived in several rentals, but I could walk to school. We were the last class to use the old downtown building. I made one good friend (Dave Powell) during that year. We hung out together a good bit of the time, often with his girlfriend (Gail White). I didn't participate in any school activities during my senior year. I did join the Naval Reserve, which jump-started my Navy career. My favorite classes were physics and chemistry. English was hard (McBeth). The school site is now a parking lot.

DAYTONA BEACH JUNIOR COLLEGE DAYTONA BEACH, FL

After my four-year stint in the US Navy, I returned to Daytona Beach, attended Daytona Beach Junior College (now Daytona Beach State College) for two years, and received an AS degree. Surprisingly, I was motivated to study and got good grades. My favorite class was physics. My teacher became a father figure. He encouraged me to go on and get a BS degree rather than a job fixing televisions, which was my initial post-Navy plan.

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA GAINESVILLE, FL

I transferred to the University of Florida and majored in Electrical Engineering. I applied myself and did well. However, my master's thesis was a real drag. My committee chair didn't speak much English, and I didn't speak Chinese. After four years, I had my BS and MS degrees.

(See another story, my CLO experience at UF)

Erna Nixon

How I first met Erna Nixon, found Melbourne Village, and the Audubon Society.

It was 1970, and I had just graduated from college and moved to the area to start my first real job at Harris Semiconductor in Palm Bay. I was 28 years old, single, and didn't know anyone in town except my new co-workers. I rented an apartment in Southgate near FIT on Babcock Street.

I was looking for things to do in my new hometown. The weekly Melbourne Times newspaper carried articles and announcements about everything happening in South Brevard. I noted an announcement that the Quakers met Sunday morning at a private home. I had heard about Quakers and decided to attend.

They met in a picturesque small home on Melbourne Ave. It was the second house west of the railroad facing Crane Creek. Today, it is a B&B. Just a handful of elderly members and I were in attendance. I discovered the meeting was an hour of silent prayer. Ten minutes was all I could handle. After the service, we sat around the dining room table and ate the bag lunches we had brought. One of the discussion topics was the Audubon Society film lecture series presentation that afternoon in Rockledge.

I went to the program and was introduced to the local Audubon Society. After that, I attended their meetings and field trips. One of the field trips was a guided tour of Nixon Hammock in Melbourne Village, led by Erna Nixon herself. We all met at the entrance to the Village, not far
from Minton Corner on the “Kissimmee Highway,” which was two lanes at the time. I remember a large map of the Village at the entrance with a directory of all the residents.

We were guided through the street maze to the hammock's entrance. A soft-spoken little lady, Erna Nixon, slowly led us along the path, pointing out the plants and spiders and explaining how they were connected. She seemed a bit familiar, and I soon made the connection: She was one of the people at the Quaker meeting.

In the following years, I became active in the Audubon Society. I took on many leadership roles, including being president for four years. After FIT purchased our apartment building, I went house hunting. I knew Melbourne Village was my kind of place. I went on to live in three different houses for 28 years. More importantly, I met many new neighbors and made many lifelong friends. One was my first boss at Harris, Jim Beasom, who is still a resident. Many residents were also Audubon Society, Unitarian, League of Women Voters members, and active members of the greater South Brevard community.

Mary and I have ask that our cremains be scattered in Erna Nixon Park.

My Computers

The first computer I purchased was an Apple II+ 48k. It cost $1895 and included a 40-character wide monochrome text-only monitor and a 5.25-inch floppy drive. There was no mouse, hard drive, or printer.

The first computer I used was an unseen mainframe associated with a Fortran II programming class at the University of Florida. I had to create a punched card deck for homework assignments and turn it in for overnight execution. The next day, I picked up a printout of the results. One minor keypunch error and the result was an error report.

While I was in the Navy (1959 - 1963), we didn't have a computer as we think of them today. We did have machines called fire-control computers. They were entirely mechanical, with gears, cams, and motors. They were used to direct the guns to hit a specific target, considering factors such as range, distance, wind, ship speed, and ship course. They were interested in watching through little viewports as they cranked away, and the ship changed direction, rolled, and pitched. They were noisy too.

The first computer I used in my engineering career at Harris Semiconductor in 1969 was off-site. Access was by acoustic dial-up modem. The user typed a simple set of basic commands and then tried to execute the program.

There were huge mainframe computers somewhere at Harris for payroll-type functions. For my entire 27-year career, I turned in a weekly time card, which was then manually key-punched.

At work, I came across my first Apple computer. I was hooked at once, not because of what was happening inside the box, but what tasks it could do. I quickly taught myself how to create VisiCalc spreadsheets. I had to have one at home. I had more fun learning programming and new programs. I bought almost every new add-on feature, and they were coming fast. I added more memory. I

added an 80-character wide display. I added graphics capability. I added telephone modems 300, 600, 1200, 2400. I added a second floppy drive. Soon, I said my first hard drive, a whopping 10 Mb, cost $100s of dollars.

At work, I bought a DEC-8 for a department-shared computer. We were the second department to have a computer, and each office had a terminal. We had email, shared access to engineering test data, and other simple programs.

We were big into DEC, Digital Equipment Corporation, computers at work. When they came out with their first personal computer, the Rainbow, to compete with the new IBM PC, I had to have one for home use. The glow didn't last long, as PCs overwhelmed the market. I wanted to get every latest and greatest new model.

When I retired from Harris, all design functions, product manufacture, testing, quality control, and administration had gone to computers, except timecards.

I have slowed down buying new models in my senior years. My current desktop PC is five years old. I bought it used. I now use my iPad for almost everything, including this effort. I have been using AI agents all kinds ot search question including an occasional limerick.

I donated my desktop PC. I moved to an Apple laptop.

There once was a boy named Hugh,
Whose computers just grew and grew.
With screens stacked so high,
They reached the sky—
Now he's lost in a digital zoo!
(Credit chatGPT)

The CLO, Cooperative or Collegiate Living Organization, is a non-profit student-run organization that provides room and board to 'needy' UF students. We sometimes explained ourselves as a poor man's fraternity

My CLO Story

I first learned about the Collegiate Living Organization (CLO) in the Spring of 1965 in the housing section of the University of Florida (UF) catalog. I wrote a letter to them and invited for an interview.

I quickly qualified as "needy." I was the oldest of three children of a minimum-wage single mom. I lived at home, worked part-time, and attended Daytona Beach Junior College. The money I saved during a four-year enlistment in the U.S. Navy post-high school was long gone, except for a few hundred dollars I could apply towards my UF expenses. With the help of the CLO, small grants and scholarships, and a part-time job, I could complete the requirements of a BS degree. I was probably one of very few UF students who sent money home to help my mom, high school-aged brother, and sister. My mom had also been diagnosed with breast cancer, but continued to try to work. My dad, who had brought his family to Florida in 1957 to look for construction work, was around town but had become a full-blown alcoholic. He was an emotional and financial drain on his sometimes family.

Neither of my parents had graduated from high school. No one in our family had ever been to college. Going to the 'big' school in Gainesville was a scary time. I didn't know a soul at UF until I joined my new family at CLO. Most of us were from similar backgrounds. I have made several lifetime friends. We just clicked. While the buildings and facilities were marginal at best, the food was good. Besides, my primary focus was getting that degree, which I did in 1967.

I went on to graduate school. With the help of a graduate assistantship, another CLO buddy and I moved out of CLO to a small apartment. After obtaining my MSE degree, I started my professional career as an electrical engineer. So what does this retired engineer do now? I work in our local soup kitchen. I have a compassionate heart for those at the bottom of the economic ladder. I was there once. With the help of institutions like the CLO, I became someone in a position

to give back. Thanks, Professor Fulk, for donating your 15th Street property to the CLO in 1933. Your mama, like mine, must have raised you right.

Some CLO Memories

All the rooms were taken when I arrived at CLO in Fall 1967. They created a makeshift room for me in the living room of the Brown House. This arrangement only lasted a few weeks, but it was pretty trying. My coursework was very challenging. I had no idea if I could measure up at the "big school." õThen, I had no privacy as all the Brown House residents paraded through my space.

Soon, I had a regular room on the southwest corner of the second floor of the White House. It was small, but I often used the upstairs front porch as my primary study space.

I soon found myself on the board. I took on the job as summer president my first summer (maybe it was my second in 1967). I moved to the downstairs NE corner of the brick house for my second year. Frank Shepherd was my roommate. When not in class, I spent the entire summer stripping the woodwork and windows in the living room and refinishing them. We also reupholstered the couches, replaced the drapes, and added pictures and table lamps to give the room a little homey look. We also created a TV room in the south garage with a B&W TV and junk furniture from UF housing. As president, I had the most unpleasant task of firing our cook. His name was Early. I can picture him as a short, round-faced, friendly guy. He was stealing us blind. We interviewed and hired a replacement for the fall term. I saw her picture in the 1968 group photo recently distributed by email.

Another unpleasant task I had to deal with was a graduating resident who owed us several hundred dollars for long-distance phone calls. I went over to UF and found out I could put a hold on his degree. He paid, but was not happy about it. We replaced the phone with a pay phone.

The CLO food was pretty good. On Sunday, we were on our own. A favorite Sunday dinner was the Whataburger nearby on NW 13th. Sometimes during the week, when we didn't want to study, we would load up in someone's car and head to Jerry's for strawberry pie. My downfall was the Crystal on University and NW14th, where I would make a pit stop for a donut on the way to my engineering classes across campus.

My best memories are of being with some of the guys at CLO. There were no gals yet. Only a few members didn't hold their own or didn't belong. It was a trying time to be a student. The Vietnam War draft hung over many heads. There was a lot of distrust of institutions, from the government to corporations to the UF administration. There were rallies and sit-ins. The civil rights effort was in the news. I often tell my friends I am so old that I remember when Steve Spurrier played football, and there were no blacks on the team.

I'll close with one thought that haunts me. I wonder how Ken Fisher, a CLO member, would have written his bio if older men hadn't sent him off to die in Vietnam in 1967.

Mom and I in front of CLO White House where I lived

What now or now what?

Autobiographical: How I became an electrical engineer in Melbourne, Florida

It was 1959, and I had graduated from high school. I didn't have a big career path planned. I knew I didn't want to be moneyless all the time. I yearned for financial security. I knew I needed saleable skills. My buddy Dave and I investigated the local junior college. I thought maybe, as an electronics technician, I could get a job fixing TVs. The junior college had a pre-college class. I soon discovered it was all about speed reading for comprehension. I was not a good reader. College was not going to work. And they wanted $10 for the enrollment application. I didn't have $10 or the remaining money needed for two college years.

I could get training if I joined the Navy. Technically, I was already in the Navy. Dave and I had joined the Naval Reserves earlier in the year. It was a six-year obligation, including two years on active duty somewhere down the line. We attended monthly meetings in our new uniforms. We marched around a bit, sat in a class for an hour, and collected a monthly paycheck of maybe $20. Every summer, we were to do a two-week active-duty cruise.

Off to the local post office to talk to the Navy recruiter. He was an excellent salesman. He said the Navy could give me lots of training. He said I would be set for life. He suggested I might like the high-skill jobs available on the new nuclear submarines. They had a particular school in Idaho and the regulator sub-school in Groton, Conn. All of this required a five-year active duty commitment. I held up my right hand and signed on the line. I was off to Jacksonville for a pre-enlistment physical and testing. I discovered I had an aptitude for technical ratings.

I also quickly learned I wouldn't be a sub-sailor because I wore glasses. That should have been obvious to the recruiter. I guess he made his quota for the month. The Navy service dropped my service requirement from five to four years.

The technical ratings at the time included electronic technician, sonar man, radar man, interior communications electrician, or IC man. The latter was the school I got after boot camp. I was second in my class of a dozen or so recruits. They assigned me to two very different destroyers. The first was new with up-to-date

equipment. The second was of WW2 vintage and had outdated equipment. My job involved various interesting systems, including fire detection, saltwater intrusion, wind speed and direction, ship speed, sound-powered phones, general alarms, and our most sophisticated equipment, the gyro compass.

As interesting as this equipment was, I didn't see a post-Navy career.

I saw an ad for a Cleveland Institute of Technology correspondence course. The objective was to get a first-class license from the government, allowing me to operate a commercial broadcast radio station after passing a government exam. Every month, I get a booklet to study and a test to take to return for the following booklet. At some point, I was eligible to take the 2nd class exam. I must have gone to some official place where I took the exam. I failed the exam. I didn't understand where I went wrong and dropped the whole idea.

The thought of reenlisting and making the Navy a career never crossed my mind.

As my discharge approached in 1963, I decided to try Plan A again and enroll in Daytona Beach Junior College. I tried the two-year AS degree program as I knew I could always drop back into a technical program.
I soon discovered I could handle the courses. Reading was not an issue. It became apparent that I was motivated. I was making A and B grades. I found some of the classes interesting. I particularly liked physics as I did in high school. It became clear that I had a shot at a BS degree, but I still had doubts.

Due to my limited finances, my only option was a public university, and the University of Florida was my only choice. I briefly looked at a physics degree, but it required a foreign language; the engineering college did not, so electrical engineering it was.

Not long after continuing my studies at UF in Gainesville, I knew I could handle the coursework. Now, the question became what flavor of electrical engineer I wanted to become. Power, like FPL, was old school. Basic electronics, particularly the new transistors, were cutting-edge. Computers were starting to attract attention.

As I finished my BSEE degree, I began to explore employment. I went on several job interviews. Not only was the type of work a factor, but maybe more so was the location and reputation of the company. My hopes were pinned on IBM in Poughkeepsie, NY, but they didn't propose job specifics that interested me. RCA in Somerville, NJ, made me an offer, but again, the job was not attractive, and the location in industrial NJ was the pits. Another interview took me to Detroit, MI. A small company was looking to upgrade its technology with the latest electronics. They made the new fancy sequential turn signals for Ford Thunderbirds. Not for me, but I got to visit my Michigan relatives and old-school friends.

On a whim, I sent a resume to Consumer Reports, thinking it might be an interesting place, but I had no luck. Finally, I interviewed at a company called Radiation in Melbourne. It was not a good visit, and I didn't get a job offer, which was OK. So, I decided to continue and get my Master's degree, which I thought would open more doors.

During my two-year slog to get my MS degree, I focused my studies on the newer solid-state device technology. Unfortunately, the job market went downhill during this time, and I had no job offers after graduation. It was the new fall term at UF. I didn't want to sign another one-year apartment contract without income, so I slept on a friend's couch for several months.

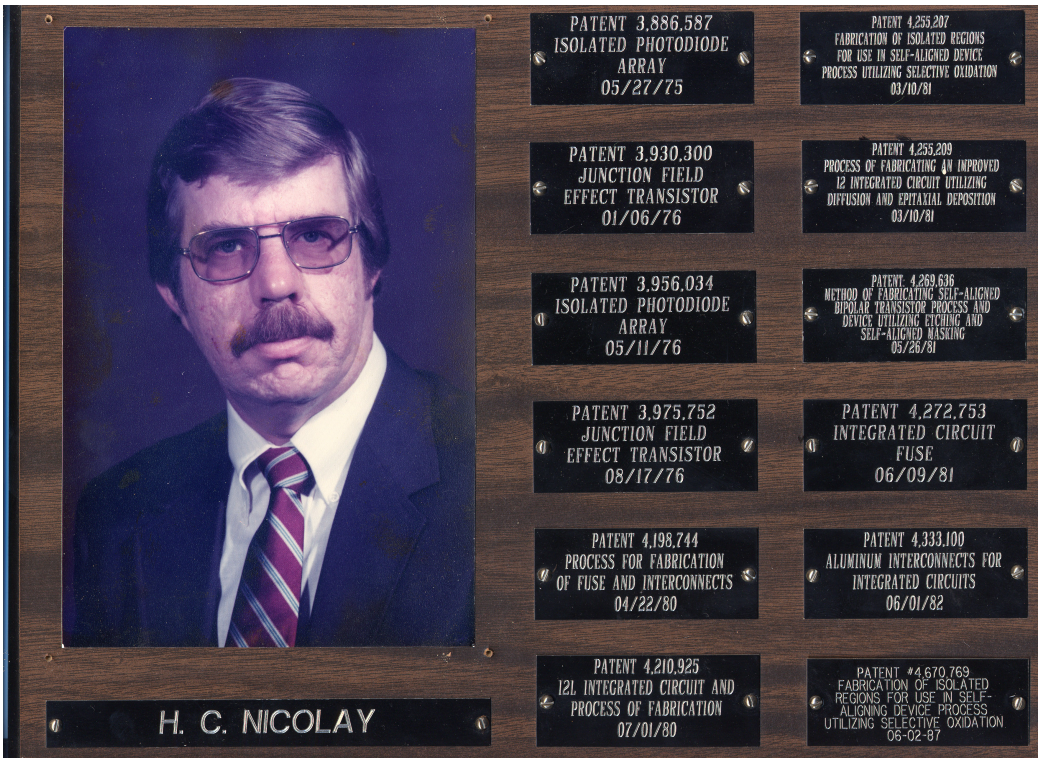
So there I was, 28 years old, with a master's degree. My single mother had died the previous year, my dad was no longer part of the family, my brother was in the Air Force, and my sister was married with a new baby. I had a used car, a few boxes of textbooks, a TV, a student loan, and a few hundred dollars.

I scraped up one job offer from Sperry Rand in Huntsville, Alabama. Neither the job nor the location appealed to me, so they pestered me for a response. Finally, one Friday, I called to accept, but my prospective boss was out for the day. He called me back the following Monday, but I again got cold feet and strung him along.

I soon heard that Radiation was hiring. In desperation, I went back for an interview. As it turned out, the position was an ideal match for my interests. My Master's Degree had opened the door to the R&D end of the new microelectronic integrated circuit solid-state semiconductor business that Radiation was getting

into. The new name for my employer for the next 27 years was Harris Semiconductor, located in Palm Bay. The location wasn't my favorite then, but it worked out in the long run.

If that fellow in Huntsville had been in his office that Friday afternoon, I might never have found the Unitarian Church, the Audubon Society, and most importantly, Mary Whaling..



My Neuro History Narrative, Updated June, 2026

I could never ice skate, roller skate, jump rope, or dance.

When I was a kid, I was the last picked when neighborhood boys picked their sandlot softball team members. I could neither hit nor catch.

When I was in junior high school, I went out for football. I didn't get on the team.

In high school, I got As in math and science and Cs in gym class, primarily for showing up. However, I couldn't do the pull-ups or much of anything else.

When I was in the US Navy, I didn't have any issues. It wasn't physical.

I had no issues in college except for physical education class in the first year.

As an adult, I enjoyed hiking and canoeing. I persevered, but I was usually at the end of the pack.

I tried for six weeks to get fit for a week-long Sierra Club backpacking hike in the mountains. I ran a mile every morning. I tried hard, but I could never break 8 minutes.

At age 39 (1980), I was diagnosed with a cervical cord tumor (Dr. John Lozito). I had a decompression laminectomy (Dr. I.B. Keller) followed by radiation. The pathology of the spinal cord tissue taken during surgery was inconclusive. Second opinions were obtained from Neurosurgeon Dr. Frank Hellinger of Orlando (probably not a tumor) and Dr.Peritx Scheinberg, Chair, Dept. of Neurology, University of Miami Medical School (inconclusive).

In the following years, I noticed I was somewhat weak on the left side. My balance was worse. I was a little left-side slap-footed. Otherwise, I would carry on with my everyday life more or less.

At age 71 (2012), I had an issue with lower back pain, particularly while walking or standing. A MRI revealed a slightly bulging disk compounded by a narrow spinal canal. I had a lumbar laminectomy (Dr. B.Theodotou), which relieved the

symptoms. He reviewed my 1980 cervical laminectomy file. As I recall, he suggested I had a congenital issue with the size of my spinal canal in both my back issues and probably not any tumors.

I have since wondered if my childhood memories, lack of upper body strength, lack of coordination, and body type are related to my neurological genetics.

At 78 (2019), I brought to the attention of my neurologist that during the past few years, I had lost strength and energy. There were days when I couldn't make it around the block with the dog. There were increasing numbers of days when getting from the parking lot to a building was slow but still possible.

I have been on a modest low-carb diet and lost 45 pounds that year. I reluctantly participated in a modest 1-hour 2- 3x week exercise class at my retirement facility. I keep up with the 85-90-year-olds, except, perhaps, for the coordination and balance parts. Coincidentally, I had also lost weight before the onset of my 1980 issues.

My neurologist ordered an MRI, and I followed up with neurosurgeon Dr. Theodotou, who performed the surgery. He reported that most of his focus was on dura repair and C-2 laminectomy. I improved slightly but continued to lose mobility and balance.

At 83 (2024), I noticed my hands were getting numb, and it was becoming difficult to perform tasks like buttons, zippers, pills, and page-turning. I had nerve conduction tests, which I passed.

I have noted a slow progression of a loss of balance and stability. I went through a 12-week PT session focused on balance. My stability improved a little, but my balance did not. My impression was that I just got a bit stronger.

I have fallen several times, but fortunately not injured beyond scrapes and bruises.

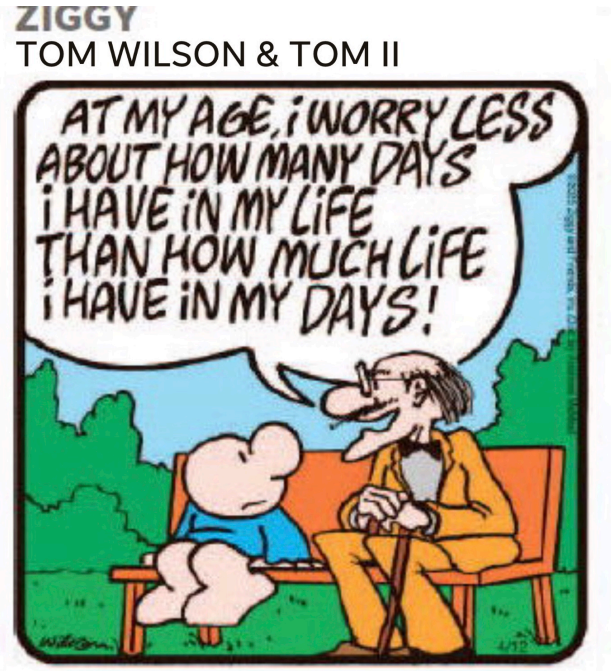
I had another MRI in October 2024, which Dr. Theodotou reviewed in December. He did not see a simple fix to relieve the compression caused, most likely by a fluid build-up in the damaged area.

Meanwhile, I continue to have the physical and mental ability to be productive and happy. I have made and will make adjustments. I am progressing to using a walker and am prepared to use an electric cart if needed. My worst fear is being bedridden, let alone stuck on a ventilator.

On April 30, I saw another neurosurgeon, Dr. Mark Fulton, to review my case. After a comprehensive review and discussion, we decided to proceed with surgery as soon as possible. The goal was to stabilize my cervical cord and reduce the probability of a minor fall or trauma causing significant consequences.

During the surgery on May 13, 2025, discs were removed between C2 and C3, and C3 and C4, and the three bones were attached with plates and six screws to hold bone grafts in place.

Post-op I am hopefully stable. Unfortunately, I continue with gradual loss of use of my hands. Another round of PT/OT improved my strength and endurance somewhat but not my balance or hands."



The Cars in My Life

I got my first Michigan driver's license on April 5, 1957, when I turned sixteen. I didn't have to take any exams as I had completed a diver's education course in high school. It included classroom material and driving with an instructor and three other students. It was my first time behind the wheel. It wasn't very comfortable for me as the other students had some experience driving. I didn't know how to let the clutch out and get moving. My grandfather, father, and uncle never helped me learn to drive, and my mother didn't.

The car I considered my first car was a brown 1950 Ford coupe. When I got my driver's license, I piled all my buddies into my car and drove 20 miles across the state line to Toledo, Ohio. We bought fireworks, which were legal in Ohio but not legal in Michigan, where we lived. It was great fun until someone threw a firecracker out the car window on our way home. We were quickly spotted by a state trooper and pulled over. He didn't give me a ticket, but we had to turn over all our fireworks. It was a memorable story to retell years later at high school reunions.

I had a car to drive and a license; what more could I want? Gas money. If we could pool our change and come up with 50 cents, we could get a couple of gallons of gasoline, which would suit an evening of cruising the two drive-ins in town. We might have had enough money for a 5-cent mug of A&W root beer.

I made the big mistake of not putting anti-freeze in the radiator, which I discovered the first cold night of the winter. Grandpa and Uncle Bob towed my first car off to the junkyard. For the rest of my high school years and Navy tour, I could only hope that there was a running car in

the family that I could borrow. I remember we seemed to have old pointy-noise Studebaker cars sometimes. They were not the cool teenage cars of the car-crazy 1950s.

I have a not-good memory of a nice car, maybe a 1950s-something Dodge Dart, that my dad arranged to buy for me to use when I got home during my Navy years. I faithfully sent him the car payment every month. I remember using it once or twice, and then it was gone. Dad had some story. I learned later that he kept my car payments to help pay off his bar tab rather than the car loan.

After I was discharged from the Navy and moved back home to attend junior college, I bought the first car I owned. It was a white Ford Taunus—a simple little car made in Germany. I never saw another like it, but it gave me several good years of service. At some point, I lost the second gear, which made driving interesting. It became the only family car after my dad split. I often picked my mom and sister up after their shifts at Howard Johnsons. I drove it back and forth to the University of Florida in Gainesville. The engine oil leaked out on its last trip and died. I gave it to the tow company for taking it the rest of the way to Gainesville.

As a university student, I didn't need a car, as I could walk to classes from where I lived. Eventually, I found a used car in the paper. It was a black four-door 1962 Dodge DL with a dash-mounted push-button automatic transmission selector. The interesting design gimmick which was soon broken.

When I became a graduate student, I had a bit more money. I traded in the Dodge for a 1965 Ford Mustang. It was a coupe with a 6-cylinder engine. It was fun for a while. As I look back now, I realize how poor the quality of cars was in those days. I kept the Mustang when I moved to Melbourne and kept it for another four years.

In 1973, I bought my first brand-new car. Being the Mr. Practical engineer in those days, it was a popular Dodge Dart, which I kept for seven years. It was a busy decade. I became active in several environmental organizations, particularly the Audubon Society. There were many meetings to attend and fun camping, canoeing, and hiking weekends around the state. The Dart had plenty of use. Most of the time, I left the canoe racks on top.

In 1980 at age 39, I had a major health scare. My neurologist told me my prognosis was poor. Looking back 45 years, I suggest he didn't quite have it right. As an aside, I have outlived him. Also, my 40th birthday was fast approaching.

So, why not a real car fit for a 40-year-old bachelor? I bought a 1980 Datsun 280-Z sports car with all the extras. It cost twice that of a regular car. It was great fun zipping around town, hoping everyone would see the sporty new me.

A few years later, the glamour wore off, and the car began to rust away and spit and sputter. I remember a couple of co-workers had the same model, and they also had identical rust issues. It was time for a new car. I bought a 198x GMC Safari van. It was, again, reasonably practical for hauling camping gear. Mary and I began dating in earnest about this time. We could easily turn the van into a camper. It was a big step up from tent camping.

Mary and I were heading to the alter in 1992, and Mary was looking to get a small pick-up truck, something she had always wanted. As a wedding present, In got her a 1992 GMC Sonoma pickup. She loved driving it around the county, checking on all her nursing clients. I drove the van to work at Harris.

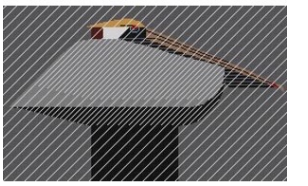
When the time came, we traded in the GMC Safari for a new 1991 Dodge Caravan. We had a requirement of untinted windows for bird-watching trips and bucket seats in the second row to keep the new granddaughters at arm's length from each other.

When the time came, we traded the GMC pickup for a new Honda Ridgeline. It was an excellent vehicle we kept for ten years with no problems. After we moved to BVE, we gave the well-used Caravan to a needy family. It was time to downsize to a single car we could share. We traded the Ridgeline in on a used 2018 Subaru Forester, which has served us well.

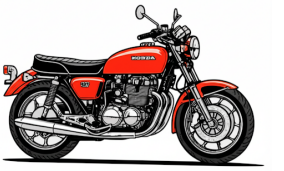
The next step will be no car, but we will still have BVE van service, family, and Uber. I probably will have to forgo the Jetson-1 VTOL drone idea.

Wet Riders

Mary and I were sitting on my new motorcycle, waiting for the Melbourne causeway bridge to close after a sailboat had slowly made its way through the open passage. It was pouring rain, one of our regular Florida afternoon deluges. We had no choice about getting soaked, as boats always had the right-of-way. In a way, it was a good thing. We paused and took in the scene for a few minutes. Brown Pelicans coast by just over our heads. Other pelicans sitting on the nearby bridge pilings, totally unaffected by the warm summer rain.



Pelican in Downpour
by Charles Harper



Honda 350/4

We were going from my house in Melbourne Village to Mary's house in Melbourne Beach. It was Mary's first ride on a motorcycle. I didn't tell her then, but it was my first time carrying a passenger. This was the first motorcycle I had ever driven. Only a few months earlier, I drove my car to the dealer on US1 to pick up my Honda 350/4. I leafed through the operator's manual, tried out the controls, and headed home in the busy 5 o'clock traffic. My heart was racing the whole time. I managed to stay on the pavement most of the time.

The gasoline shortage during 1973 oil embargo motivated me to get transportation with much greater fuel efficiency. The motorcycle accomplished this goal. Every couple weeks I refueled the bike by syphoning a few gallons of gasoline from the now seldom-driven car gas tank. I still don't like the taste of gasoline. It reminded me of the couple of times when I was a kid and I was anesthetized with ether.

I used the motorcycle as my primary transportation for several years. A few close calls and observations of other bike-owning friends limping to work in casts gave me concern for my longevity. I reluctantly sold the motorcycle with nothing more than a few minor exhaust pipe leg burns.

Our Wedding, Plan B

"Mary is in the hospital; she slipped and broke her ankle."

With this message, I was off to the hospital. Our annual Friday before Christmas department lunch gathering was over for me. When I entered Mary's room and saw a cast from toe to knee and heard her story about getting laundry underfoot going down the stairs at home, her crawling to the phone to call 911, and her surgery, complete with ankle plate and screws. I realized that our wedding plans, which were two days hence, would have to be amended, to say the least. Mary's doctor discharged her on Sunday morning after giving her permission to leave with just enough time to get home, dress, and make it to the 2 pm ceremony. I called friend Judge Bill McCluan, who was officiating. I told him we were moving the venue from under the spreading live oaks in Deerhead Hammock Park in Melbourne Village to the garden at the Strawberry Mansion, where we had already arranged the reception dinner. It was a small gathering of family and friends, so informing the local and out-of-town guests of the change was not a problem.

The planned honeymoon was not going to happen. I had arranged a surprise wedding night at a romantic bed and breakfast in New Smyrna Beach. I picked out an old historical home on the Halifax River. Our room was on the second floor with a balcony overlooking the water. I phoned to cancel the reservation, champagne, and room flowers. We ended up home in Melbourne Beach on the pull-out couch bed in the first-floor family room. For a romantic touch, Mary's friend and her honor matron spent the night at our place. She felt compelled to be sure we were all tucked in bed. This gesture didn't make me happy at the time. However, it has been an amusing antidote ever since.

After New Smyrna, we had reservations for Christmas week in a historical inn in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia. We had heard that all the buildings were specially decorated for the holiday season, which was something to see. Unfortunately, it didn't happen for us.

After a month convalescing, Mary got the cast off. We organized a fun home reception and croquet party for friends, neighbors, coworkers, and family.

We did get to Williamsburg the following summer in a rented RV. It was one of the stops on a grand tour that included Mary's hometown of Whitesboro/Utica, New York, and family and friends along the way. We have since been back to Williamsburg an additional time, as there is plenty to see and

The honeymoon

The wedding

Gone Fish'n

'

In the opening scene of The Andy Griffith Show, Andy and Opie are seen walking down a path, fishing poles in hand and whistling cheerfully. There is something nostalgic about this scene of a boy and his dad going fishing.

My father never took me fishing, but my grandfather Nicolay did. According to his daughter, my aunt Wilma, he would rather fish than tend to their Kansas farm, which is why she said they lived in a shack.

Not long after Grandpa sold his Kansas farm and moved to Michigan, where most of his family lived, he built a small boat out of plywood. I couldn't have been past five, but I can picture the boat under construction.

We lived only a few miles from Lake Eire, between Toledo and Detroit. Sometimes, Grandpa would ask me to go fishing with him. He would trailer his boat with a small motor behind his pickup truck down to a launch spot on the big lake. We probably didn't go out very far. Of course, I couldn't turn him down. I

was hoping for a big adventure, but from experience, I knew it wouldn't be much fun.

The best time to get 'bites' was early morning and late afternoon. Our fishing days were long, especially for a little kid, bites or not.

For bait, we used worms and minnows. We would have to buy the minnows, but worms were free for the picking the night before the trip—night crawlers, they were called. I think Grandpa would let me bait my own hook after he rigged up my pole, the old rod and reel type. We bottom-fished, so it couldn't have been too deep. We would sit there all day long. Maybe we would move a little to what we hoped was a better spot.

Some days, we would get no bites at all. Some days, there was a mess of little bluegills or maybe even a perch, whatever that was. In any case, they were small, but they were always better than nothing. Looking back, one wonders if any fish from the Detroit cesspool were safe to eat. I want to remember the highlight of the long bite-less days must have been lunch; Certainly some kind of sandwich and maybe cool-aid. No soda/pop/soft drink were in our house. I don't think we talked much. Think of all the questions I could have asked him about his growing up on a farm in Kansas after his father died when he was eight years old.

If we did get a 'mess' that meant fried fired fish for dinner. Grandpa did most of the cleaning. Maybe he would let me scrap off some of the scales.
Grandma would do the cooking part. These little fish were full of bones. For a little kid eating them was a challenge. The adults seemed to have mastered the how to get the meat off the bones while eating them like chicken legs.

When I was an older boy about Opie's age, I lived about a block from the Raisin River in Monroe, Michigan. All the boys in the neighborhood gravitated to the river. We tried in vain to build a raft to venture downriver like Huck Finn. We never got anywhere. We never thought about swimming in the river. There were many unidentified floating slimes floating by. There were many industrial plants upstream. We all seemed to inherently know the water was not safe. However, that didn't stop us from attempting to fish. The only fish we caught were little white fish we called suckers, also known as trash fish. I remember that at least once we thought we would have a fish fly. We brought a cast iron skillet and some

crisco from home and built a fire. I don't think we did a very through job of fish cleaning or cooking.

I never took up fishing after that.

Florence Mae Conner My Memory

Preface

It was 1957. I was in Daytona Beach. It was the first day of my senior year at a new high school, having just moved to Florida from Michigan. I was standing in a line for new students. Next to me in line was another new Florida student, Dave Powell. Having something in common, we struck up a conversation. We became friends and have remained so for 60+ years.

During our senior year, Dave and I joined the US Naval Reserves. Dave hooked up with a girl named Gail White. We were often a threesome.

After high school, Dave went on to the local junior college. I joined the regular US Navy for a four-year hitch. The ship I was on was home-ported near Jacksonville, about two hours away. When I had the opportunity, I would return to Daytona Beach to visit family, sometimes Dave and Gail.

Now Enter Florence

My timeline may be off for a year or so. In the Summer of 1961, we went to the Daytona Beach Ocean Pier; Gail, Dave, and I. Gail introduced me to an attractive girl she knew, Florence Conner. In retrospect, it was a setup. We drank cokes, danced, and talked and talked. I couldn't dance worth a hoot. But she didn't complain. After we left, we talked more on the way to our cars. We were both embarrassed when we realized we had left Dave and Gail waiting. We hit it off. We agreed to meet again. I was in seventh heaven. I was 19 and finally found a girl who liked me.

Whenever I got home, I would try to see Florence. We never double-dated with Dave and Gail. Thinking back, Dave must

have finished his stint at the junior college and moved on to complete his naval reserve active duty obligation in the summer of 1961. Florence must have finished her two years at the junior college in the summer of 1962. So this year must have been the year we saw each other the most. However, I only got home sometimes.

My ship often was at sea for weeks at a time. Sometimes we did a cruise lasting six months. We exchanged lots of letters. The following year, 1962-63, would have been Florence's first year in Gainesville at UF. I have a memory that I really didn't see her often. Sometimes she was 'busy.' I was heartbroken and depressed.

I have good memories of some of our dates. Most often, we went to the movies. We went for long walks. We drove along the beach. We went to the beach to picnic, sunbathe, and swim. One time, on New Year's Eve, we went to an adult nightclub to dance even though Florence was underage. I remember I had to stay aboard my ship one Christmas, but the family was allowed to visit for Christmas dinner. My mother brought Florence and my brother and sister to Jacksonville; it took a lot of work for her to see me. I was so proud to share my world with them. I also remember seeing Peter, Paul, and Mary at the baseball venue in Daytona Beach. I don't remember doing anything with her or anyone else, including friends or family.

Her mother was a most pleasant and poised person. Her father was another story. Sometimes, when I came to pick Florence up, he would sit me on the porch. While Florence and her mom retreated inside the house, he would share bible

verses with me, all relating to the proper treatment of women, like Watch your step, young man. I had the feeling he had more than one glass of wine in him during these discussions. Florence must have been embarrassed by these antics, but she never said anything.

We didn't have dates on Friday nights. It was the Conner family's night to go to the bank and out to dinner, and I was never invited to go along.

I remember Saturday night dates sometimes included a stop at the Catholic Church. Florence would cover her head and go in for confessions while I waited in the car.

In the summer of 1963, I was discharged from the Navy and returned home to start junior college. I have a memory of seeing her maybe once, between her junior and senior years at UF.

Our next meeting would be our last. I think it was Christmas 1963. I know now she married a year later. I gave her a small gift. Her mother was there but soon left the room. It was an awkward meeting. She wanted me to know she had discovered a new lifestyle—a girl away from home for the first time. There was no longer a place for me. I was hurt. My first girlfriend had dumped me. I knew she was way ahead of me by three years of education and career, and I never faulted her for hooking up with someone else in her new world.

A few years later, I attended the wedding of a mutual friend, Gail, who had introduced us. Friend Dave had moved to New York. Someone mentioned, 'You know Florence got married? I wasn't surprised. It was the end of the story, but it still hurt a little.

Looking back, I give Florence some credit for changing the direction of my life. Nearing the end of my Nary tour, my career plan was to go to the junior college for electronics training and work in a TV repair shop. Florence suggested I try the college path, as I could always return to the technical level. So I did. I discovered I was smarter than I thought. To boot, I was more mature and driven. I went on to get my MS degree and a career in engineering. I can't fix TVs, but I know how to design and manufacture semiconductor chips. I have a few patents to prove it.

Prolog

For the longest time, I saved a stack of letters Florence had sent me in the Navy. Boy, did I long to get a letter? There weren't exactly love letters, just news about her life. When I married in 1992 and moved in with my new wife, I thought it wise not to keep them. Don't I now wish I had them to share with her grandchildren? I had never really found out what became of her. I didn't know her married name; Conner is a common name. Now at 82 I am beginning to write bits of my personal history. After a brief search using Ancestry, Facebook, and Google, I quickly got a phone call from her son Bryce who told me that she had died just a few months prior. I was delighted that he seemed to know my name. Florence must have been reminiscing. I am deeply flattered that she remembered me. I have now filled in some of her life story. She seemed to have made the journey to the end with good memories and a wonderful family.

Rest in peace, dear Florence. Thank you for being my first girlfriend
and helping me believe in myself.

Hall One Room School

I like old maps. They give a different perspective on life in the good old days, mainly if they show a location linked to our past.

I found three maps of West Stein Road in LaSalle, Michigan, dated 1876, 1896, and 1901. I lived here from about 1946 to 1947, when I was 5 to 6. I have cousins who still live there.

Down the road to the west was a one-room school. When I attended, there were two one-room schools. One building, which still stands as a private home, was for the lower grades. The other building, now gone, was for the upper grades. I think I only attended for my first grade. My Aunt Wilma says she attended the other upper-grade building until she began riding a bus to high school in Monroe.

I asked her about the school recently. She called it the Hall School, a term I did not remember. It was no surprise when I saw on the 1876 map that the Hall family owned the property nearby. Perhaps the Hall family once owned the property upon which the school was initially built. That history is not known to me.

Not present in 1876 were US 24 Telegraph Road and the rail tracks. However, the (First) Presbyterian Church. (Of LaSalle) can be seen at the NW corner of Stein Road and present-day Dixie Highway (SR 125).

1876 there were no cars, so people moved around on foot and by horse. LaSalle probably had some basic services, like a general store and post office. A trip to Monroe was an all-day undertaking.

By 1896, the rail tracks were along what would become Telegraph Road sometime after 1901. John Lechler had purchased the property on the north side of West Stein Road and still owns it today.

All three maps indicate that the property purchased by Grandpa Nicolay belonged to the Morse estate at least up to 1901.

The 1901 map clearly shows a building on the north side of West Stein west of the rail tracks. I think this was the old two-story unpainted farmhouse occupied by the Hendrix family. Mrs. Hendrix was my first-grade school teacher. The house was creepy, right out of a movie.

Footnote-

I believe it was during my first grade school year that I stayed in LaSalle while my mother was in the TB sanitarium. My brother went to live with his Uncle Ted and Aunt Marie in Lincoln, IL. Just a baby, Sister Carol spent the year with Dad's Aunt Helen and Uncle Dan in Detroit. I may have lived in the little pre-fab white house part of the year. Dad continued to build the pre-fabs, including seven in a row on Bentley Drive. We took the first one when Mom came home. It was my second school year, and I attended Boyd School in Monroe. I continued at Boyd for the 3rd and 4th grades. Mom went back to the sanitarium during my 5th school year. I lived with Aunt Helen and attended school in Detroit. John and Carol lived with "Grandma Grunt". Dad built the Dixie Highway ranch house, which we moved into when Mom came home. While living there, I attended Custer grades 6-7-8, and Cantrick JHS grade 9. We moved to Neighbor Road north of Monroe during my 10th grade at Monroe HS. We lived in the town of Erie during my 11th grade. In my senior year, we were in Florida.

Order of the Arrow

We were discussing right-of-passage ceremonies recently, and an old memory popped up. I was inducted into The Order of the Arrow at Boy Scout summer camp when I was about 14 years old. It was, and still is, an honorary society for senior scouts who have reached some achievement level.

The ceremony has elements that are deeply rooted in many cultures.

After dark, all the boys in the camp gathered in a large circle around a campfire on the lake's beach.

There was drumming, but otherwise, it was still. Then, a small group of canoes came from across the lake. In each were older scouts, mostly our camp counsellors. They were dressed in Native American Indian garb and carried torches. It was all very dramatic. They began the ritual by slowly circling the outside of the assembled campers. Then, they pulled the inductees from the circle and put them into the waiting canoes.

I was one of the inductees this particular year. It was not clear to me what was going to happen next. The leaders took us to a location not far away. However, I didn't know exactly where we had been taken. I wonder if we were blindfolded.

We were each taken to separate locations, given a blanket, and instructed to stay alone until late that night. I don't know exactly what happened next, but I guess we were escorted back to camp, no worse for wear, and now officially members of an exclusive scouting group known as a lodge, with all the rights and privileges thereof.

We could now wear the Order of the Arrow sash and patch with our formal uniform.

ORDER
OF
THE
ARROW
INFORMATION FOR
NEW MEMBERS
ORDER OF THE ARROW
A NATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF SCOUT HONOR CAMPERS
is a member
in Lodge, with dues paid to
Duly acknowledged by
Bob Cronise
Netami Lekhiket
BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

John George Nicolay
Famous Relative

You might get a link to Arnold Schwarzenegger if you Google my last name. No, he is not my kin, but he once played John George Nicolay, my somewhat famous immigrant relative, in a TV documentary about Abraham Lincoln. John George Nicolay was President Lincoln's private secretary, biographer, and my great-great uncle.

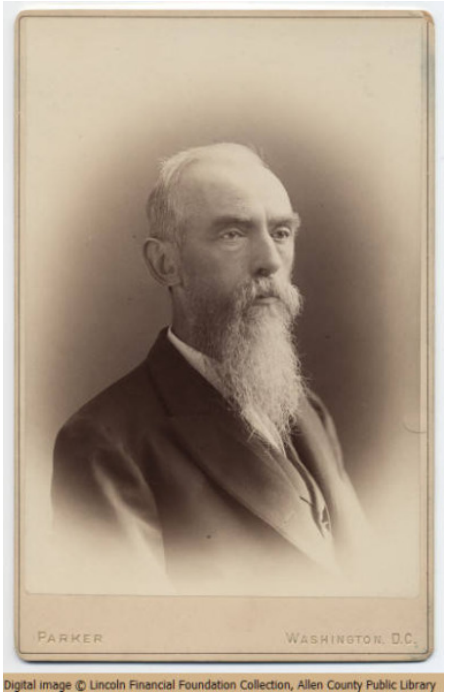
John George immigrated at nine from Essingen, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany. Mary and I visited the Essingen family homestead, and distant relatives were still living there during a visit to Germany. He came to the USA with his mother, father, and four older siblings. They boarded a ship in France in 1838, which took them to New Orleans. After a brief stay in Cincinnati, Ohio, they homesteaded in Pike County, Illinois, where they found rich bottomland to farm on the Illinois River. Being the youngest and a bit puny, John George took to reading, writing, and book learning. He became a newspaper writer and editor as a young man. John George went to the state capitol of Springfield and clerked for a prominent lawyer. After Lincoln was elected, he asked his lawyer friends about a secretary to take to Washington. John George came highly recommended, and Lincoln hired him unseen as his private secretary.

In those days, if you wanted to talk to the President, you just went to the White House. Secretary Nicolay, or Nic-o, as Lincoln called him, would schedule you to see the president. The White House staff comprised Nicolay, John Hay, and a third man. They all stayed in the White House with the President's family. Now, there are hundreds of staffers.

After Lincoln's assassination, John George went to Paris for a position in the U.S. Embassy. He returned to Washington for a position at the Supreme Court. He spent the rest of his life working on the definitive Lincoln biography, along with the help of John Hay, Robert Lincoln, and his daughter, Helen. The ten-volume academic work was published years later. There were attempts to make more readable, condensed versions. Daughter Helen also became an author. She wrote history books targeted at young adults.

John George met his demise in 1901 and found his last resting place in Washington, DC. Helen Nicolay, who never married, met her demise in 1954. Arnold Schwarzenegger still lives in California as if anyone, particularly Maria, really cares.

Nicolay, Lincoln, Hays



Nicolay

Movie Call

‘Now hear this, the showing of tonight’s movie, The Sound of Music, will commence on the mess deck at 0700 hours.”

In the Navy, one of my jobs was showing movies on my ship. The good part was picking the movie I wanted to show. Sometimes, the selection was not that great. I can't count how many times I have seen South Pacific or Bonanza TV reruns. In those days, they were all 16 mm film on several reels. We had a luggable projector to set up, usually on the crowded mess deck.

We got new movies via blind sharing with other ships when in port or during underway refueling operations.

Now, fast forward to the present day at BVE. Movies are still popular. While everyone has access to unlimited possibilities thanks to the internet and services like Netflix, it is still fun to join neighbors for a trip to a local theater matinee. In addition, BVE has held in-house movie nights from time to time. They are well attended, indicating a strong interest, but the makeshift setup in the breakfast room is not optimal. It can get pretty crowded with both tables and chairs, and the TV screen size makes it hard to see and hear in the back of the room.

I suggest an upgrade. Perhaps the current activity room could work as an on-demand movie venue. How about a large, almost full-wall 16 x 9-foot screen and a high-end ceiling-mounted digital projector? A good sound system for our senior ears would be a bonus.

A few tables could be shuffled to the rear for other needs. The current chairs could then be arranged in a theater style. Maybe eight wide and 12 deep would work. Everyone could see, hear, and be comfortable.

Another possible venue is the Sun Room. A large motorized drop-down screen could be installed over the fireplace or on the south wall. Chairs could be rearrangedH as for other events. Pull-down blackout curtains may be necessary.

I believe the key to success is a large screen, maybe twice the width of the fireplace, and a bright, high-end projector.

Many residents who don't want to watch TV alone in their apartments would welcome one night a week at the BVE movies. In addition, live TV broadcasts such as the Super Bowl could draw a crowd. Maybe there is a good marketing pitch here, too. Resident volunteers could help with the logistics, like bingo and the country store. I assume the activities director could publish the schedule for the coming attractions. There is a popcorn machine somewhere around here.

Let's all go to the movies. What’s playing tonight?

Dinner with Chuck

When I Met Hugh Nicolay
By Charlton Heston

The year was 1952. I was 29 years old. I was in Detroit, Michigan, for two reasons. First, it was the Detroit grand opening of the Cecil DeMille movie The Greatest Show on Earth. I had a significant supporting role as the circus manager. The picture won the Oscar for best picture of the year. A few years later, Mr. DeMille cast me as Moses in his next movie, The Ten Commandments. My movie career was off and running.

The second reason I was there was to visit my mother, Lilla Heston, and my stepfather, Chester Heston. They had recently moved to Detroit from Chicago and bought a comfortable, modest home on a tree-lined red brick street in a pleasant neighborhood.

My mother made friends with a lady named Helen Pierron several doors down the street. Mrs. Pierron arranged for me to be introduced at the Pierron home. The house was full of people from the Pierron extended family. The ones that stood out were the oldest and the youngest. The oldest was Helen's mother, Barbara Nicolay. She was the matriarch of the family. Everyone deferred to her. She was approaching 90 years of age, which, in those days, was quite remarkable. Shuffling from her room to the large dinner table took her a while. Everyone patiently waited. She would be the first to be seated. She had a shawl around her shoulders. Her hair was in a bun. It became apparent that she was very hard of hearing and could not actively participate in the conversations.

The youngest person there was watching me. He was a boy, about 11 years old. His name was Hugh Nicolay. He was Helen's grandnephew. He was living with his great aunt because his mother was in a TB sanitarium.

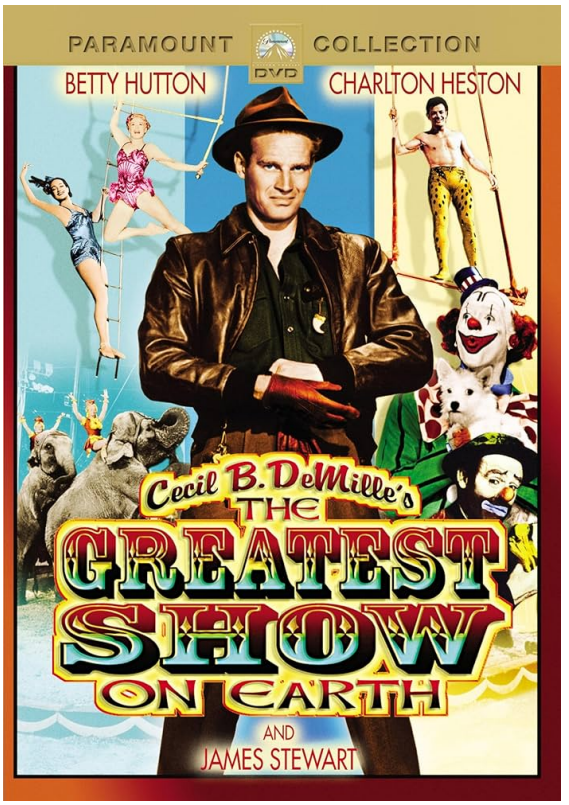
I learned he wasn't the first of his family to live with his great-aunt. Hugh's baby sister lived there at another time when their mother was in the same TB sanitarium. Hugh's father lived with his aunt for a time when he first moved from the Kansas farm to Detroit in the mid-1930s. Helen's home seemed like a way station the family used when they needed a place to stay.

I don't think Hugh knew who I was; I was just some kind of movie star. His idea of a movie star was Hop-Along Cassidy from the Saturday morning serials. I hope he was impressed when we visited the big theater to see my movie in downtown Detroit.

I don't know if he followed my career in politics and the movies, or what happened to him. I hope he did all right. The large, supportive extended family that I met must have helped.

As it turned out, my mother, Lilla Heston, and Helen Pierron remained lifelong friends. After they became widows, they shared an apartment in a retirement facility. They both lived to be 95 years old, and Helen's mother, Barbara Nicolay, lived to be 99. Hugh is still alive, I think. I am not.

As told to Hugh Nicolay, August 2023



My Ancestry.com DNA Experience

I didn't get into this because I wanted to find out what countries my immigrant ancestors came from, as I already knew I was Germanic with a little Irish and English thrown in. Not true. I am only a few percent Germanic; most of my ancestors came from England, Scotland, and Ireland. A few came from Sweden, but none from anywhere else, at least for the last 500 years. Before that, all bets are off.

I hoped to add more generations of ancestors to my tree; it didn't happen. My tree is almost complete, thanks to the detailed efforts of Kay Sellers on my paternal side and Mary Ann Marnon on my maternal side. I wanted to get hold of missing photos and stories. That didn't happen either, with a couple of exceptions.

I got access to 999 cousins going laterally on the tree. I already had the names of all my first and second cousins who took the DNA test in my tree. In many cases, I had to figure out who they were, as many participants used nicknames or made-up logins to protect their privacy. Many participants use nicknames, do not have trees, and do not reply to messages. So they remain just unknown cousins on a list.

Ranking my matches by the strength of the match using the cM number provides an exciting twist in our family. My closest matches are James Nicolay and Mary Ann Ryan. Both are grandchildren of John Lloyd Nicolay and Wilda King. I am the grandchild of Theodore Nicolay and Else King. John Lloyd and Theodore are brothers. Wilda and Else are sisters. So James, Mary Ann, and I are double cousins; we share two sets of great-grandparents, Columbus

Nicolay and Barbara Sappenfield are on the paternal side, and James King and Mary Ellen Howell are on the maternal side. I also found a more distant double cousin, and the cM is high for that match. All these families lived within a mile of each other in Kansas, attended the same one-room school, and hung out at the bridge over Dragoon Creek, where they swam in the summer and ice skated in the winter.

Ancestry guesses I have 12 2nd cousins using the cM>200 criteria and 35 3rd cousins using the cM 90 to 200 criteria. Of the 47 matches > 90, I could identify 28 of them. My review using this data produced two 1st cousins, 19 2nd cousins,

and 36 3rd cousins. The cM data is highly variable. My 2nd cousin's cM numbers range from 119 to 469, and my 3rd cousins' range from 194 to 15. I have put all this data in a spreadsheet and sorted it by cousin number (1.1, 2.0, 2.1, 3.0, 3.1, 3.2) and cM. For the near cousins, I can not put them in a tree; I can always tell if they are on the father's or mother's side by the DNA matches we share. I rarely identify shared surnames for distant cousins, so I need to figure out where to start.

Ancestry has a computer program that tries to link DNA cousins. It is pretty good. It uses my tree and all the other public trees in Ancestry. I might not know the cousin's real name, but I know how they fit in the expanding tree. In one case, they linked me to a sixth cousin.

Another fun feature of the DNA match analysis is a map of the locations of all near and distant cousins if they registered their physical location. I have five here in Florida and many others scattered in other states: two in Canada, three in the UK, one in Ireland, and two in New Zealand, one of which is a 2nd cousin I know. I will not ever meet all these cousins scattered around the world, but it makes me reflect on the notion that we are all one big family, all kinfolk, all brothers and sisters in a way, and cousins.

10 Physical Fitness Test
Every Man Must Pass
Hold Breath For 45 Seconds
60 Squats
Stand On One Leg For 1 Minute
5 Pull Ups
Swim 200 Meters Continuously
Plank For 7 Minutes
Lift 1.5 Times Your Body Weight
Do Exactly 30 Push Ups
Touch The Toes of The Legs Without Bending The Knees
Run 1.5 KM in 9 Minutes

Fit for Life and Love

I saw this poster recently; it bothers me to no end. Who decided that all men should be able to do five pull-ups? I knew a guy who had polio. He lost total use of both arms. They just hung at his side. However, despite holding a paintbrush in his mouth, he was an accomplished artist. He was also very knowledgeable about many subjects, including birds of prey. He would hide in a blind spot on the beach for hours, observing migrating hawks, even though he couldn't hold a pair of binoculars. He went canoeing and camping with the help of his lady companion, even though he needed to take a portable breathing machine for sleeping. No one expected him to do any pull-ups.

Others, including myself, also have physical limitations not of their own doing that are not so obvious. I never could do five pull-ups. I couldn't skip rope, dance, skate, hit, or catch. I was the last to get picked when the neighborhood boys chose sides for the sandlot softball game. Maybe you can imagine how a seven-year-old boy who just wanted to fit in felt.

I dreaded gym class. I knew I would stand out for the wrong reasons. I would get As and Bs in science and history, and Cs at best in PE just for showing up.

Physical prowess was critical back in the day. If you couldn't run down the prey and throw a spear, the clan didn't eat. The other male hunters and elders would reject you; you wouldn't mate. These days, things haven't changed much. We emphasize sports and physical activities, particularly for young males who want to join the clan. I have overheard the 'shaming' when the chubby kid can't keep up or the clumsy kid drops the fly ball. I was one of those kids. It sure didn't help my self-esteem much, like it was my fault. I must have been lazy or something. On the contrary, I have finally figured out that my problem is congenital. I wasn't born perfect. It is not all that obvious, but a couple of MRI scans of my spine in recent years point to issues that probably have something to do with not being able to spear the prey or get picked for the softball game. No coach, doctor, or anyone except me ever made the connection.

I have tried to compensate by being a 'nice guy.' I always had empathy for the people who were a little different. As my mother had quietly taught me, I tried to do the right thing. I tried to stand out in other ways and maybe get recognized as a worthwhile male clan member. It was rare to get this message from my family, particularly from my father. I remember a few fleeting moments here and there, like at the annual patent awards banquet at Harris, where I worked, and the Florida Audubon convention when I was once selected as state chapter president of the year.

I had the incredible fortune to finally mate with a woman who saw my good qualities, values, and accomplishments. And she tells me so. And she doesn’t hesitate to say to others publicly. She brings out the best in me. She reminds me it's worth it.

Mary, I'm sorry I can't dance or do five pull-ups. But maybe, if I could, I wouldn't have become the person I am. Who knows? I wouldn't have it any other way, not that I had much choice. And I sure wouldn’t have you at my side as I finish this chapter of my being.

Dad Letters

Note - this exchange of letters between Hugh and his dad was an exercise suggested by a therapist

October 13, 1991

Dear Dad,

This letter is long overdue. I have several things I want to get off my chest and clear the air. Although some will be hurtful, I think we will both feel better. Perhaps, and I hope it turns out so, we will have a new and open father-son relationship.

The one big thing I missed from you during our entire relationship was your interest, support, and, where deserved, your praise for my life, activities, and accomplishments. Looking back, it seems all you were interested in was your work and your dream of success. You didn't include raising a family as part of your success dream. Although it may have been in your mind that by becoming financially successful, you could provide a fancy home, new car, boat, and other trappings, and therefore, a good father and husband. I think you were more interested in obtaining these visible signs of success for your self-esteem so you would look good to your friends, your parents, and the rest of your family, including your younger brother with whom you competed for the praise of your parents.

I thought I was a good son. I didn't get into trouble at school or with the police. I got pretty good grades. I was active in Scouts and other youth groups. I had some part-time jobs and provided for my financial needs. I rated chickens, picked apples for sale at a roadside stand, built woodworking projects, and did whatever I was asked around the house, as best I can remember. I don't know if you ever told me, "Son, you did well."

During my junior year of high school in Michigan, after you went to Florida to find work and left us behind for a year, I acted as father for the family, with the help of Uncle Bob and Grandpa Nicolay. I don't remember asking for this

responsibility, nor did you ever hand it over to me or thank me for whatever I did. For me, this was the beginning of the long slide down in our relationship from a level that wasn't very high.

After high school (did you attend my graduation and say nice job, son? I don't remember.), I joined the Navy. My best friend was attending Junior College, but I didn't have $10 for the application fee. I didn't consult you or Mom; I saw it as a way to get training and security. I came home often during those four years. Again, I don't remember you expressing an interest in my life.

As I think about it now, maybe it was partly my fault. I probably didn't talk much or volunteer much information. Perhaps I had become conditioned to believe you weren't interested; therefore, I didn't say much. I remember always asking you how your work was going and would get the same old speech about your big plans and dreams and how other forces, people, and bad luck prevented your success. You know I have never figured out how you held on to your dream, your entire life, defeat after defeat. It seems now that the dream was your only reason for living. I wasn't part of that dream and therefore didn't exist.

After four years in the Navy, I came home and lived there for two years while attending junior college and working part-time. It was during these years that the family broke up for good. You moved out, came back briefly, then Mother and Carol moved out, and the divorce followed. I had gone off to Gainesville to attend the University. While in junior college, I thought I was a good son again. I helped a little at home, got good grades, and my picture was in the paper for getting a scholarship. I bought my car and had a girlfriend. I don't remember ever discussing my life or feelings with you in any detail.

After College, after my mother's death, and after establishing myself in In Melbourne, we again had contact a few times a year. You remarried and are living in Hollywood, Florida. I remember seeing you at your place and mine. I had hoped you would have been proud that I had a good job and was an active community member. I don't remember any extended conversation about my life; it always focused on your life and dreams. Again, perhaps I gave the impression I didn't want to talk about myself.

So where was Dad during all these years? Now I know why you didn't focus on your big dream. You got drunk. Too drunk to achieve your dream and too drunk to have time for family. Not a fall-down-gutter drunk, but a semi-working drunk who managed to drive home about 9 pm each night and fall asleep in a chair, only to get up at midnight and go out again for a few more beers.

My willingness to see, let alone communicate, with you during your latter years diminished rapidly after we moved to Florida. The move disrupted my family's lives. We were destitute. My dear old mom had to try to support the family. You contributed less and less and drank more and more. Mother became ill and later died, and I fault you for making her last years so hard, so far from her roots in Michigan.

I also fault you, right or wrong, for forming my personality. The oldest son of an alcoholic was not my choice. Nor was having a mother and other family who enabled and put up with your behavior. However, in the end, I accept the cards that have been dealt to me and try to do my best. I am generally not the type who blames others - perhaps I should - I usually blame my shortcomings and
failings in myself.

There are a few good memories from the early years. I remember one or more fishing or hunting trips, you taking me to a lecture on flying saucers, and you taking the boat scouts on your boat. If I pressed my memory, there may be others.

You let me, mother, sister Carol, brother John, and others down. You disappointed us. At the recent family reunion, I was embarrassed to admit I was your son. I hoped your cousins would see me as me, Hugh, rather than "Ray's son," as such, my emotion is anger-suppressed as it may be. I feel sorry for you, particularly since I never felt that you thought or recognized your failings relative to your role as father and husband. It would have been nice if, at the end of your life, you had reached the stage of your recovery where you could have confronted your children and said, "I'm sorry, please forgive me". But that didn't happen, and we must live without it. And go on living. We will do our

best, trying to look back and understand, but mostly looking forward to what we can be - if we work at it.

Your son, Hugh

October 28, 1991

Dear Hugh,

I received your letter last week. I am sorry you feel the way you do about me. I tried to be the best father I knew how to be. Unlike you, I did not have the opportunity to get a good education. I dropped out of high school to work on the farm. Even though your mother always wanted me to get a factory job, I knew I could never make any money working for someone else. Maybe if I had more education and been a better businessman, I would have managed to give you kids more. I never got much credit for what I did do. Your mother always wanted me to be somebody I wasn't. So our married life wasn't so hot. I would go to the local tavern rather than stay home evenings and listen to all this. It is there that I also made contacts and got construction jobs.

I also wish I could have done more for my mother and father. It seems your uncle Ted, on the surface at least, did more for them. But it was more show than substance. Ultimately, he managed to get a hold of everything they owned. He always got more attention, being younger and sickly as a kid.

I realize my drinking has been a problem, especially as of late. I have been sober for several years now and have made new friends through AA. It has been a real struggle, but I know it's something I had to do. I hope to provide some security for my old age and give you kids something too. I have been busy lining up some new jobs and should hear if I can get them next week.

I hope you remember some of the good times along with the not-so-good. I remember we went out on Lake Erie in a boat and took some of your Scout friends. I helped you raise chickens and built a chicken coop for them when we lived on S. Dixie. I remember we went fishing several times, and I took you deer hunting.

Things have not gone as well here in Florida. First, your mother got sick, and then I had a heart attack and couldn't work. I am finally getting back on my feet. I wish I could see more of you. You never call or come down to Hollywood.

I'm unsure what we're doing for Thanksgiving or Christmas this year. It would be nice if you and Carol could come down. I haven't heard from Carol or John in some time.

Well, let me hear from you again. Please don't be too hard on me. I haven't been the perfect father - I don't know of any ideal fathers; many are much worse than I am.

Love, Dad

Dad & Me 1970s

Maggie Email

Granddaughter Maggie Schneider is moving from Florida to Denver upon completion of FA training for Frontier Airlines

Hello, Dear Maggie,

I am getting good reports via your mom. I knew you could do it and have a life adventure to boot.

I understand you are a bit anxious about setting up a shop in Denver after training. I would be, too. After college, I moved to Melbourne with a few hundred dollars, enough to rent a one-room apartment for a few months. I think it was $135/month. But I knew my new salary at Harris would cover my expenses with something left over to save for a new car, which I got four years later. I also ‘moved up’ to a larger one-bedroom apartment at $175/month. It wasn’t long before I had enough for a down payment on a small house in Melbourne Village.

Be assured that I will help with your Denver setup expenses. I might be more generous if I thought you were making good housing choices, considering the uncertainty of how much income you can plan on at the beginning of your employment.

You might want to go ‘cheap’ for the first year. It will be clear what you can afford. Maybe you might have to wait for a more comfortable pad. Hopefully, you can look forward to something nice when you feel comfortable with your means.

Sharing with multiple roommates or renting a room with a family might be an option. Evan’s family in Denver could help. Other fellow FAs could let you join them. Does Frontier provide any help?

Other expenses will also need to be carefully managed. Do you need a car in the beginning? Will there be any possibility of side jobs like Macy's while you are between flight days?

There is a lot to think about, as I am sure you are way ahead of me, and I don't fully understand all the factors here.

I am not sharing this with Nana or your mom. There is already enough family drama.

Love you, Maggie. You are my star.

Papa

Feb 2025

Hello Half Brother

As told to Hugh Nicolay

I just discovered I have a half-brother that I didn't know about. My name is Brian, and I am 55 years old. I just got my Ancestry DNA match results back. With the help of a cousin, Hugh, who knows more about our family tree than I do, I learned that my new-to-me half-brother, John, is seven years older, lives in Chicago, and has a daughter, Brittany

I understand John was adopted soon after birth. He has a copy of his birth certificate and knows his birth name, date, location, and mother's name. His birth father is not named.

John's daughter, Brittany, also has her Ancestry DNA matches. She may be the one interested in her family history, not her father. Brittany did provide what little she knew about her paternal grandmother, Sandy, and shared her father's Ancestry DNA match list with my cousin Hugh.

Hugh quickly figured out who John's likely maternal birth grandfather was in the NICOLAY tree. John also had one firm match on his birth mother's side. It was a common name, Kristin. Hugh sent a message to all the Facebook and Ancestry members he could find with the same name. He asked them if they knew Sandy's or John's name. A few responded negatively, but one said she was Sandy's daughter. Hugh told her about her half-brother John living in Chicago. She said she had other siblings, but indicated she would not reach out to John, but she would respond if he contacted her.

Hugh did some detective work to narrow the search for John's birth father. Based on the DNA data available and the complete tree Hugh had compiled, he made a list of male family members between the ages of 15 and 30 who might be candidates. Of those on this list, only four brothers lived in Michigan when John was born. Their ages were such that any of them could have been the father. Hugh passed this information on to Brittanny, who was no longer responding. It is possible that her father told her to stop.

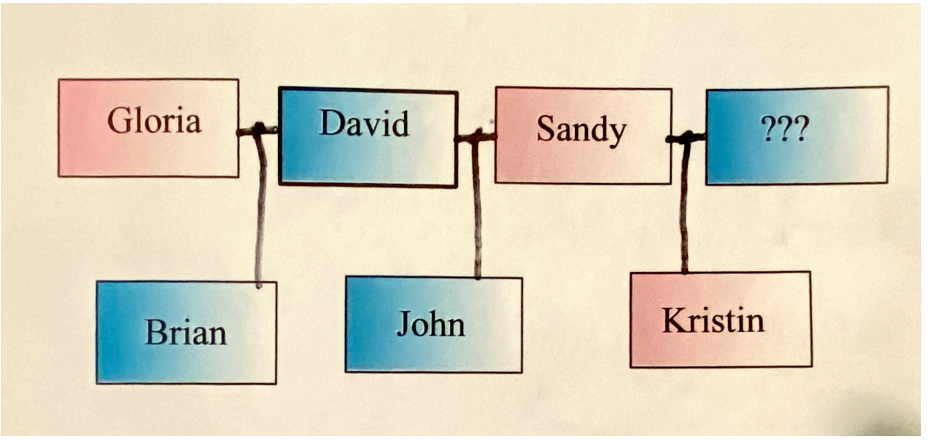
A few years ago, a new DNA match came to light. It was for the daughter of the second-oldest of the four brothers. She was John's cousin, not a half-sister, so her

father was not John's father. This new information left the three other brothers as candidates. As an aside, she had seen John's Facebook picture and thought he looked like her Uncle David, the third of the four brothers. Hugh thought this observation and David's age of 19 at the time of John's birth made him the most likely of the brothers to be the father.

Using my DNA results, I know that my father, David, is John's father and my sister's half-brother. What should I do? Should I contact John, Brittany, or Kristin with what I know? Maybe I could arrange a little family reunion and see who shows up.

My father, David, says he never knew a girl named Sandy. He says he had a steady girlfriend named Mary during all this time.

Hugh said he did his part, true or not, by adding all this new information to the Ancestry NICOLAY-CRAWFORD tree.



Footnote - half brothers Brian and John, and half sister Kristine have now communicated with each other.

Clocks Time

I built this Eli Terry Mantel Clock from a kit in the early 1980s. I got the idea from a friend, Tom Lawton, who was building a larger grandfather clock. All the cherry wood pieces were pre-cut. My contribution was assembly and finishing. It came with a wind-up mechanism. I replaced the mechanism once with another identical one. Keeping the chime aligned properly was always tricky, so it chimed as expected. Eventually, I replaced the original works with a battery-powered unit. In 2025, I replaced the battery-powered unit with another, but without the chimes.

I built a smaller clock from the same vendor about the same time as a gift to my brother and his wife. They were nice enough to get it out of the basement and display it on their fireplace mantel when they knew I was visiting them at their estate, Windy Knoll, in rural Virginia.

More recently, I built a wooden clock from a craft kit. It operates by weight and pendulum. Unfortunately, it only runs for a couple of seconds at best.

Gail - Match Maker

Gail doesn't know it, but she was instrumental in my marrying Mary. I had known Mary for many years. We had several shared interests. We belonged to several of the same organizations, notably the Unitarian Fellowship and the Audubon Society. At about the same time, she was president of the Unitarian group, and I was president of Audubon. I was single, but she was a married working mother with two children.

I met Gail during my senior year at Mainland High School in Daytona Beach. Everyone knew Gail. She always had a smile on her face and a warm greeting. She always seemed to be happy and was everyone's friend. You might say she was popular, but not in the traditional high school sense. She wasn't in the cheerleader social club crowd; she was just someone who was everybody's friend. Looking back, she kept relationships at arm's length.

I spent more time with Gail when she became my best friend's girlfriend, Dave. Dave and I were new to Florida and Mainland High School for our senior year. We discovered we had much in common, similar family backgrounds, and personalities. Dave was more social than I was. He was tall and fit. He soon found Gail, or she saw him, I am not sure which. We were often a threesome on weekends if Dave or I could borrow a family car for a drive-in movie.

Gail did fix me up with a date for the senior prom, but it didn't go well for me. That's another story. After high school, I enlisted in the Navy. I remember seeing Dave and Gail several times, but they soon parted. Dave also joined the Navy. Dave and I kept in touch, mostly by postcards and Christmas letters. We continue to do so to this day.

While in the Navy, I learned that Gail was getting married. I attended the reception at her parents' home, but didn't stay long. By this time, we had no common friends or interests, and I never saw her again until many years later.

I had never been to a high school reunion and had no real reason to do so. I attended Mainland High School for only one year and kept to myself, except for Dave, Gail, and others. Dave convinced me to meet him and his wife in Daytona Beach for our 30th reunion. The only event we attended was the reunion dinner.

We all sat together at a large table. After a trip to the buffet, I returned to find Gail sitting next to Dave. Dave's wife was not all that happy with the surprise guest. Gail was not in our graduating class, but graduated the following year. It was apparent she had invited herself to the event to see Dave.

The situation went from awkward to uncomfortable. At first, Gail smiled like her usual self, but soon became emotional. It was clear she wanted Dave back in her life. Dave tried to handle the situation as best he could by talking her out of whatever she was thinking, but it was not working. He soon had to end it all and leave with his wife.

The reunion was a bust. I offered to drive Gail home. She had calmed down a bit by this time. She was living at home with her Mom and Stepdad. I greeted her Mom and got out of Dodge. What a mess!

Dave spent the rest of the night explaining to his wife that he was an unwitting victim. Of course, his wife wished he had blown her off from the get-go. They returned home to Pennsylvania, and I went to my home in Melbourne Village. All was back to normal—at least, so I thought.

A few weeks later, the doorbell rang. Guess who was standing there? You guessed it, Gail.

I had just gotten out of my hot tub. Gail's smile dropped when she saw me standing there, dripping wet with a towel wrapped around me. She asked, “Should I return later?”, and I suggested an hour.

Thinking back, I should have suggested a year or two. But, in a way, I was flattered that she wanted to see me. Her issue at the reunion was her old boyfriend, Dave, not me. I was curious about what was going on in her life during the past thirty years. She had taken her maiden name back. She was living with her parents. She didn't drive. She had a girlfriend who drove her to Melbourne from South Daytona.

They did return in an hour or so for a conversation. It turned out to be a very superficial exchange. Gail did not want to discuss her life, children, or anything

else. She never asked about my life. I quickly got bored. I also didn't appreciate her racist 'N-word' remarks. Looking back, I regret not calling her on that one. We were not living in the same world anymore.

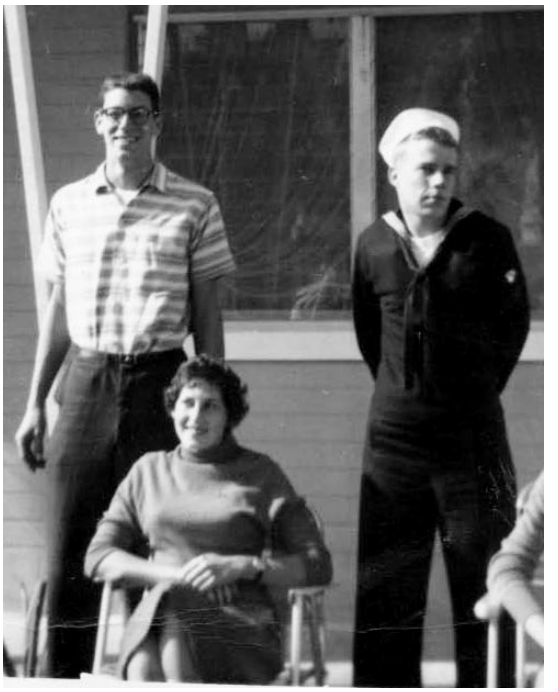
Not soon enough, her girlfriend and driver excused herself and went out to their car. Gail also more quickly stood and started for the door. She reached into her purse and retrieved a multi-page handwritten letter, which she began to read aloud. She started an emotional, disconnected discourse about her fanaticism and that I would somehow save her. I was dumbfounded. I don't remember exactly what I said or did, but it was clear enough that I wouldn't respond in any positive or empathic way. I don't think there was even any eye contact. Indeed, there was no physical contact. Emotionless, I was heading in the other direction as fast as I could. She left quickly without a glance back, but maybe I never gave her a chance as I closed the door behind her.

My thinking about this event was not going away. I worried that Gail might be a danger to herself. Would I be responsible if I did nothing? What should I do? Who should I call? Indeed, this was not in my standard left-brain engineering problem-solving experience tool kit.
 human behavior. We have always been able to talk about many things. Unknown to me, she was in a graduate program with Nova University, leading to a Master's Degree in counseling psychology. I remember she had called me years earlier and wanted to come over and talk. We went for a long walk. She told me about her pending divorce and all the issues involved. I think we met again a couple of times, but drifted apart. The 1980s were a time of change for both of us. Now it was 1989.

Mary's advice was welcome and straightforward: do nothing. She said, “You are not responsible for Gail's mental health issues. She had friends and family”. I never heard from or saw Gail again.

But I did see Mary again. We saw each other frequently and became a couple. We had the usual dinner and movie dates. We went birdwatching, camping, and traveling together. I liked her son, daughter, and dog, Chrissy. In 1992, after deciding we would be happy together for the long haul, we announced our engagement. Our wedding was on December 20, 1992.

So as it turned out, Gail was an unintentional matchmaker



Dave Gail Hugh about 1960

I shared this story with Dave and he replied:

That pretty much sums it up. As it turns out, Gail was a troubled woman.

A couple of more tidbits. While at the reunion dinner, she asked if we could talk outside for a minute. She put her arms around me, but I pushed her away at arms length and told her to get over it. I was not going to be back into her life. With tears in her eyes he told me that she thought of me often and wished we could have gotten together after I got out of the Navy. She even named her first born son David. She indeed had some serious issues.

Tale of the Red-tailed Squirrels

Those who have had a bird feeder know about the endless battle between man and squirrel. Squirrels continue to have the upper hand. They have infinite patience and persistence. We had a bird feeder in our backyard in Melbourne Beach. We seem to have had four squirrels, and they almost always found a way to get at the bird seed on the feeders. First, I decided to trap them using a humane live trap and move them to a nice park nearby where they could spend the rest of their lives looking for acorns. We would be squirrel-free. I relocated the four to the town park, maybe a half mile away. The problem was that I soon still had four squirrels in the backyard. I repeated the trap-and-release game with the same result: four squirrels in the yard. I wondered if perhaps the squirrels had a good homing sense and they were finding their way back to our yard. So, for the next round of trap and release, I used a can of spray paint to paint their tails red. Surprise, red-tailed squirrels showed up in our yard within a few days. The obvious solution was to relocate the critters much further away. Their new home was a park several miles away and across the Indian River Lagoon. Success, no more red-tailed squirrels!

But wait, we still had squirrels going after our birdseed. I counted maybe four. Maybe I just needed to be more aggressive. I kept a tally, and in a single week, I trapped and relocated 20 squirrels from our yard to a far-away new home. As a result, we still had four squirrels in our yard, more or less.
Lesson learned. Trapping squirrels and relocating them is akin to trying to empty the ocean one bucket at a time. Nature has an endless supply of squirrels, enough to fill every yard in the world with four hungry, persistent squirrels, aka rats with bushy tails, some red.

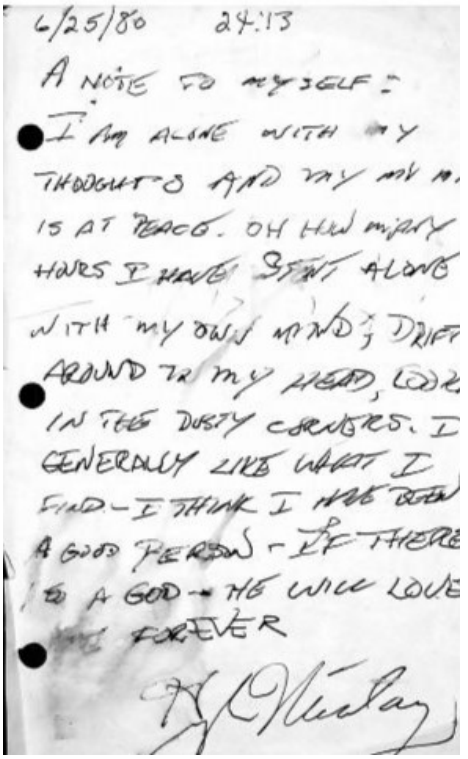
Postscript. The only proven method to dent the squirrel-man bird feeder battle is to put either distance or a physical barrier between the bird seed and the persistent hungry critters. Squirrels can leap a lot farther than you think. Physical barriers can form a cage with bar spacing large enough for some small birds like finches and buntings, but too narrow for squirrels, or baffles or stove pipe contraptions that impede them from climbing a bird-feeder pole.

Note to Myself

I have heard there are no atheists in foxholes. I wrote this note in my journal the night before I underwent surgery in 1980. It was a trying time for me. I had been told I had a tumor in my cervical cord, and the prognosis was not good.

This note reads:

I am alone with my thoughts, and I am at peace.
Oh, how many hours have I spent alone with my own mind, drifting around my head and looking in all the dusty corners? I generally like what I find. I think I have been a good person. If there is a God, he will love me forever.


6/25/80 24:13
A NOTE TO MYSELF:
I AM ALONE WITH MY
THOUGHTS AND MY MIND IS
IS AT PEACE. OH HOW MANY
HOURS I HAVE SPENT ALONE
WITH MY OWN MIND; DRIFT
AROUND IN MY HEAD, LOOK
IN THE DUSTY CORNERS. I
GENERALLY LIKE WHAT I
FIND - I THINK I HAVE BEEN
A GOOD PERSON - IF THERE
IS A GOD - HE WILL LOVE
ME FOREVER

Floating Between Worlds

The Florida heat pressed down on me like a heavy blanket that afternoon, the kind that makes you long for shade and water. Clouds were starting to pile up in the distance, their cottony edges swelling into the beginnings of thunderheads. I decided it was time to cool off, so I made my way to the pool.

The moment I stepped in, I noticed it — the water was tepid, neither hot nor cold, the perfect in-between. My skin relaxed into it instantly. I drifted toward the center and let myself float. My muscles loosened. The usual pull on my joints vanished as if gravity had loosened its grip.

The sounds around me faded into a gentle rhythm — the steady hum of the pumps, the soft splash from the waterfall feature. My ears took them in not as noise but as music, the background score to an unhurried summer afternoon.

Lying on my back, I gazed upward. Through an opening in the leafy canopy above, I could see the growing towers of white cloud, their shapes twisting and swelling in slow motion. I imagined myself soaring among them, skimming past their bright tops and peering over to the other side. Maybe I was Superman. Maybe I was a drone. Either way, the view was mine.

In that moment, the world felt bigger — not just the everyday grind, not just errands and obligations, but something layered, alive, and vast. A natural world that quietly holds more beauty than I usually take the time to notice.

Only a few minutes passed, but as I floated there, the pool became more than water. It became a doorway. And on the other side, my spirit stirred awake.

Footnote - there is a significant AI rewrite here.

Spiritual Journey

The Sunday church service was a vivid memory of itchy pants and impatience. I'd sit in the pew, barely listening to the minister's droning sermon, fixated on the courthouse bell. The moment it chimed noon, I knew church was almost over, and I could finally go home and shed those awful pants.

On the Sundays my maternal Crawford grandparents made the hour-long drive from Detroit. My post-church task was to start preparing the fried chicken dinner. First, I'd pick an unlucky chicken from our small flock. I'd send it on its final, headless spiritual -journey with one quick chop. My next job was to dunk the bird in a bucket of boiling water and pluck its feathers, handful by handful, before handing it over to my mom to finish the job.

I don't recall my Crawford grandparents ever attending church or discussing religion. My paternal Nicolay grandparents, who lived just a few miles away, were passive members of a local rural Presbyterian church.

Sunday mornings followed a familiar routine: Sunday school at 10 a.m., then the main service at 11 a.m. Dad would drop us off and pick us up, as Mom didn't drive. A buddy and I sometimes snuck out of the service to go to a nearby drugstore to look at magazines. Since Mom was in the choir, she didn't miss me. She attended choir practice faithfully during the week. She suggested I join the youth choir at one point, but I must have whined enough that she didn't press the issue.

It was time to officially "join" the church when I was around twelve. I had to take summer classes, and the only thing I remember from them was the Bible verse John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son..." I've since realized this verse is the basic premise of Christianity. I don't recall any other details of that rite of passage, but I've since learned that almost all cultures have rituals for young people to be accepted as adults. As a teenager, I stopped attending church, partly because we had moved farther from town and transportation was difficult.

We were Presbyterians, most likely due to my mother's Scottish heritage. She was married in a Presbyterian church in Detroit, which she had attended as a young woman. Their youth group was probably the only social activity allowed for a respectable, unmarried girl. I was also baptized in the same church. After we moved to Monroe, Michigan, she joined The First Presbyterian Church on the town square. It was a historically dominant building complex with a large, formal

sanctuary and a smaller chapel. The basement had classrooms and an ample open space for potlucks and Boy Scout meetings.

When we moved to Daytona Beach, my mom found a Presbyterian church that she attended and sang in the choir. It was the same church where my sister was married and, later, where my mom's funeral was held. But I don't remember going there very often myself.

When I joined the Navy after high school, I had to choose a religious preference for my dog tags. The options were Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. I'm unsure if "none" or "other" were choices. I selected Protestant. In boot camp, we could attend Sunday services, but it wasn't required. After that, I didn't participate in any religious activities.

I became more interested in my spiritual journey in college, though my studies were always my top priority. I made a point to attend talks by visiting lecturers. I remember a particularly controversial one by the well-known atheist, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, who claimed that organized religion had caused more death and misery than any other institution. I looked for a church in my college town, and even attended one service, but it didn't click for me then.

After college, when I moved to Melbourne, I started looking for new things to do. I attended a Quaker meeting at a private home. I saw a newspaper article about a speaker at the local Unitarian Universalist fellowship. I knew nothing about Unitarians but was interested in the topic and decided to go. I found the group's perspective on religion to be new and interesting. I participated for a few years and was fascinated by the members and the discussion topics. It was the first time I realized other people were on a similar spiritual quest, searching for their place on the spectrum. I learned a lot, but I still felt like something was missing.

The focus of the Sunday meetings was often on social and political issues of the day, with little discussion about religion or spirituality. It started to feel repetitive, and the personalities in a small group setting can sometimes take their toll. Eventually, I lost interest. However, the best thing that came out of the experience was meeting my now wife, Mary. We got married a decade later. Mary had been a Unitarian her whole life. She told me about a Sunday school program she attended as a child called "the church across the street," which involved visiting and studying different churches in town—an experience I'd never had.

Mary and I started attending an online Unitarian Universalist church called The Church of the Greater Fellowship during the COVID era. It wasn't long

before we felt that a single-interest group had "hijacked" the group. While we supported their cause, we grew weary of hearing the same message every week.

As I've gotten older and continued my search, I've started to find and collect different bits and pieces of a spiritual perspective that works for me. Once, I even took a test designed to find out what religion you are; I agreed with the results, but I felt like some essential parts were missing. Now, the remaining task is to gather all the pieces and put them into a cohesive whole, though I'm not sure that journey will ever truly be finished. Perhaps the constant search and the learning are the point in themselves. I am a self serving missionary.

I read once, “I know what I know(1%). I know what I don't know(4%). I don't know what I don't know(95%).

I know I don't like itchy pants.

First Presbyterian Church, Monroe, Michigan

Sea the World

The saying goes, "*Join the Navy and see the world*." I did, and I did. It wasn't my first intention when I enlisted for four years after high school. I hoped to gain skills I could use in a career, which I did to some degree. World travel was a definite side benefit.

Until then, I had only been on short family trips with my grandparents to visit relatives in Chicago and East Tennessee. Our family's move from Michigan to Florida allowed me to see the Atlantic Ocean for the first time.

After completing boot camp and training at Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois, I transferred to destroyers home-ported at Mayport near Jacksonville. I visited the following new to me places in the Americas: Montreal, Canada, New York City, NY, Portsmouth, VA, Charleston, SC, Savanna, GA, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Trinidad.

Of these, NYC was the most interesting. It was traditional for the fleet to visit during the 4th of July holiday. Thanks to the USO, I went to a New York Yankees baseball game, to the top of the Empire State Building, Coney Island, and Times Square.

My first major extended cruise was a 'show the flag' trip around Africa. The cruise was a byproduct of the Cold War era. We visited many ports unsuitable for sailors to wander around and get into mischief.

Sometimes, the ship arranged half-day bus trips into the countryside. Other times. they organized softball games with beer and hot dogs. The memorable places where we could go ashore included Cape Town, South Africa, Mombasa, Kenya, and the Seychelles Islands. In Cape Town, I learned about apartheid firsthand. Public facilities were signed white, colored, or negro. I knew about white and colored from my new Florida home, but not all three. White included the Afrikaners, the descendants of the original European settlers, and the English colonists. Negros were the African black native people. Colored were all the rest, including oriental, middle eastern, south asian, and other minorities. In Cape Town, I went to a movie theater. It was not unlike in appearance to a movie theater back home, which was also ‘whites only.’ Another interesting stop was

Mombasa, Kenya. We had the opportunity to go on a safari in an old school bus. I expected to see ‘jungle’ as in a Tarzan movie with lions and elephants. Instead, the area was dry scrub. I saw a wild giraffe but was more impressed by a distant view of Kilimanjaro, which I had heard about in some context. I had never heard about the Seychelles islands in the Indian Ocean until we stopped for a short visit. They are picturesque, as one would expect to see in the South Pacific.

A later North Atlantic cruise included visiting the ports of Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Portsmouth, England. During the stop in England, I signed up for an overnight side trip to London. I saw all the standard tourist sites. I learned for the first time that London Bridge was not the Tower Bridge. I was most impressed by Westminster Abby, particularly by the famous people buried there, including Livingstone, Darwin, Chaucer, and Henry VIII.

A 'med cruise', short for Mediterranean, was a given cruise for ships operating in the Atlantic fleet. We visited ports in Spain, France, Italy, and Greece. While in Cadiz, Spain, I made a side trip to Seville during a colorful festival and went to a bullfight. The drama was great, but I was not prepared for the bloodshed. By chance, I got a great picture of a bull pitching a matador up in he air. In the end, he lived, but the bull did not. I made two side trips in Italy: Rome and Pompeii. In St. Peter's Basilica, I saw Michelangelo's Pieta sculpture and in the Sistine Chapel, his famous ceiling painting. I didn't know about either of them then, but I realized how significant they were in a college humanities class years later. I was more impressed at the time by Pompeii. I understood how it felt to live in regular towns many centuries ago.

On another med cruise, we visited Beirut, Lebanon. We could go ashore for a few hours. I treasure a wooden box I bought there. A unique part of this cruise was that we traversed the Suez Canal both ways. We were not on good terms with Egypt then, so we didn't see the pyramids. We made stops in Pakistan, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Ethiopia, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. We couldn't wander around these places and were ready to return to the Mediterranean.

Navy Ports Visited

Seville: One for the bull

Scouting and Me

“On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty...” My mother was the one who first sparked my interest in Cub Scouts. She probably saw the notice at our church and thought it would be good for me. It was. Scouting quickly became an important part of my growing-up years. From Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts and later Explorer Scouts, I found a place to learn, explore, and grow.

Summer scout camp was especially memorable. During the first couple of years, I discovered the joys of swimming, boating, and archery. I learned life-saving techniques that gave me confidence in the water. The camp was located on the northern shore of Lake Washington, in an area known as the Irish Hills of southeastern Michigan. It was called Camp Kanesatala. The lake and the late afternoon ‘free swim time ' as a main attraction. The good swimmers were allowed to swim out to a raft, thus avoiding the inevitable blood suckers in the muddy bottom. Senior expert swimmers were allowed to swim across the one-mile-wide lake with supervision.

It was at scout camp that I began to notice the natural world in a new way. Most mornings, I joined a few early-rising scouts for a pre-breakfast bird walk with our nature counselor. He was a quiet older man. The boys all knew that he had one glass eye. They would try to persuade him to take it out and show us. Once in a while, he would oblige. I learned to identify birds by their calls and colors, and I still have the of birds I saw at camp—it’s one of my treasured keepsakes.

After spending a few summers as a camper, I returned to the same camp as a counselor. For two years, I taught orientation, knot tying, and hatchet sharpening. I had a great time helping younger scouts learn the same skills that I had only recently discovered myself. Those summers gave me some of my happiest memories.

Back home, I worked hard on my merit badges with enthusiasm. My goal was to become an Eagle Scout, though I never quite earned all the required badges. Still, I took pride in the ones I did earn—archery, citizenship, photography, and astronomy. Poultry raising was a favorite project. It was the only merritt badge that I remember my dad helping me.

As I grew older, my interests gradually shifted. Cars, music, and photography began to claim more of my attention, and scouting slowly receded into the background. But looking back now, I realize how much those years taught me—about nature, responsibility, friendship, and myself. Scouting gave me experiences that shaped the person I would become, and for that, I'll always be grateful.

My Beliefs or Lack Thereof

Sorry Mom. I have always enjoyed the Easter and Christmas holidays, and I still do. What is not to like about the Easter bunny, colored eggs, Santa, and classic Christmas carols? They were a safe bet at any age. I never told anybody, but I never bought the virgin birth or save me sinner stories. I would go right along with repeating the Lord's Prayer with the rest of the crowd. But in my heart, I really didn't want to. It wasn't all that important, really. I told myself I was an agnostic. I was not sure, searching for alternatives.

It wasn't until I started attending Unitarian meetings that I realized others shared my doubts as well. They were educated, professional, and respected members of the community. A popular Unitarian bumper sticker read "To question is the answer." After a few years of attending Unitarian meetings, I began to realize was lacking growth and spiritual stimulation. The primary focus seemed to be on current political and social issues.

More recently, I wanted to write something about my spiritual thinking. I started reading and searching the internet resources. I searched on the keywords Unitarian, humanist, Buddhist, naturalist, and agnostic. With some AI help, I came up with the following:

I value freedom of belief and open-mindedness (*Unitarian*),

I acknowledge the limits of knowledge about God or the divine (*agnostic*),

My ethics are grounded in human reason and compassion (*humanist*),

I draw from Buddhist practices like mindfulness and non-attachment (*Buddhist*),

I see nature as sacred and central to understanding life (*naturalist*).

In short, I am a spiritually curious, ethically grounded person who finds meaning in reason, compassion, mindfulness, and the natural world—without relying on supernatural beliefs.

Sounds good, but I am still pondering. I reserve the right to add, change, and delete. Amen.

Busy As A Bee

I am reading a book about Buddhism. There is a discussion about the practice of looking deeply, and another on walking meditation. I thought I would give it a try during my morning walk with our pup, Katie. I have been watching some yellow flowers near our apartment, so I thought I would focus intensely on one of them.

The flower and I became one... then a bee came, then another bee. Now I was watching the bees and lost my focus on the flower... so much for looking deeply.

I wondered how many and how often bees were coming to this flower. So I set a five minute timer on my phone and kept track of bee visits. There were 12. That extrapolates to 144 in an hour. For eight hours of sunshine the count becomes a little greater than 1000 for a single flower. But there were many flowers and they all appeared to all having many visiting bees. I used my bird flock counting techniques to estimate that there were 400 bright yellow flowers in this one patch. That means there were maybe 400,000 flower bee visits in a single day. My next project would be to try and track a single bee for five minutes and count how many different flowers the bee visits and how many times it returns to the same flower. Maybe I'll make a movie so I can be more certain of my math. The next question, how many individual bees are visiting the flower patch.

Or maybe I will find some other silly project to fill my few remaining days here at BVE or go back to my book.

Peruvian primrose-willow

Hitchhiking Veteran

Hitchhiking appears to have gone out of favor. When was the last time you saw someone hitchhiking? Do you even know what I am writing about?

When I was in the Navy in 1960, I was a crew member on destroyers home-ported at Mayport, located about 18 miles east of Jacksonville, Florida. I had the good fortune of being home ported 100 miles from my family and friends, who lived in Daytona Beach. Whenever my ship was in port and I had a long liberty weekend , I would try to get home. There was no regular bus or train service from Jacksonville to Daytona Beach, and since I didn't have a car, I had to scramble for transportation. More often than not, my only choice was to hitchhike.

For some reason, I have no specific memories of the southbound trips except for one. Four black Marines picked me up in their convertible. They decided they needed to stop at a bar for drinks. I went inside with them, but I had no intention to spend my $40 monthly paycheck on booze. Otherwise, it was not a problem for me, as I had no deadline to get home. I was caught off guard when the bartender quietly told me it would be a good idea for me to leave. Little did I know it was a 'colored only' joint. It was the only time I can ever remember being on the receiving end of radical discrimination.

The late Sunday night return trips were always more memorable and a bit stressful at times, as I needed to get back to my ship by 7 am Monday when 'liberty expired.' Fortunately, I was never AWOL. I always had faith I would make it on time. Usually, around 10 or 11 p.m. on Sunday, I would put on my sailor suit, pack my little bag, and make my way to US 1 in Daytona Beach for the journey to Jacksonville. There was no I-95 in those days. In Jacksonville, a bus departed around 6 am, transporting sailors like myself back to their ships at Mayport. So I had 6 to 7 hours to make the usual 2-hour trip.

Traffic was always light at that time of day. Sooner or later, someone would stop and offer me a ride for as far as they were going in my direction. Usually, it took several rides to complete the trip. Most likely, the driver was not going into downtown Jacksonville, where the Trailways bus station was located, so I would ask to be dropped off near a long bridge that crossed the St. Johns River and led into downtown. It was always very quiet in the big city at 3 am, and a bit spooky. I likely would not see car or soul during the final mile long walk.

It would be no surprise, I bet, if I told you I met some ‘interesting’ people during these trips. I never felt threatened, mostly just anxious, as my goal was to get back to my ship on time. My drivers were always male. Some were intoxicated. Some had sexual orientations different from mine, to put it politely. On occasions, I would ask the driver, “Please let me out at the next corner.” But most drivers were just happy to give a serviceman a needed ride.

For some reason, I can’t envision hitchhiking these days. I don't know if times are different or I was just young and naive.

It's A Dog's Life

By Coosa Creek's Lady Kaitlin Mary Nicolay, aka Katie
As told to Hugh Nicolay

I was born on June 25, 2014, at Coosa Creek Cavaliers in Lake Worth, Florida. My breeder is Juli Polachek-Drago. My father is named Dash, a black and white, and my mother is Ritz, a ruby. There are three other pups in my litter. Unfortunately, we never kept in touch.

I first met my forever family, Mary and Hugh Nicolay, when I was four weeks old. My breeder wanted to ensure we were a good match, which we were. I got to go home with them to Melbourne Village when I was eight weeks old.

Mary & Hugh had the mistaken idea that I would relish sleeping in a crate at night. I soon got to sleep on their bed or on the floor next to it, as they didn't want me to cry, whine, or bark all night.

My new home in Melbourne Village was great. I quickly learned how an electric fence worked, so I had full run of the yard. I soon connected with my extended family, including granddaughters Jessie and Maggie. I also met some of the neighborhood kids who loved to play with me. My passion is chasing lizards. I never get tired of it. If you happen to see a lizard tail hanging out of my mouth, you know I have been successful. I spit them out after a while and continue the hunt.

Before I was a year old, Mary & Hugh decided to move into a retirement community not far from Melbourne Village. While we were waiting for an apartment to become available, Hugh took me to the new place to walk around and get familiar with all the new smells. There are many lizards here as well, so the transition was not entirely traumatic. We moved in September 2015. My new home is a ground-floor apartment facing a small wooded area. I miss my big, open yard, but Mary and Hugh often take me out for walks. I have a doggy door

so I can go out on the screened porch anytime. I have made many new friends with resident neighbors, staff, and other canines. There are many cats here, too, but I ignore them. It is just my nature to assume every stranger is a new friend. I guess that is why I have a long bushy tail to wag.

Life is good at Buena Vida Estates. I have plenty of attention, stuffed animals to dismember, and good food. Merrick kibble is my staple, but I often also get a portion of added protein in the form of chicken or fish. I like it when I have visitors like son John and daughter Anna, who always make a fuss over me.

Mary and Hugh travel a lot. If the trip is a Roadtrek RV camping trip, I can sometimes go along. When they go on long trips or cruises, I stay with daughter Anna and her canine family in Melbourne Village. She has a great fenced yard for me to explore all day long. Mary & Hugh never boarded me in some strange kennel.

At BVE, I have discovered a new interest to annoy Mary & Hugh: Air Potatoes. On my walks, I keep an eye open for their potato-like fruit lying on the ground. If successful, I discreetly sneak one into the house. When no one is looking, I plop myself on the living room rug and proceed to tear it to shreds. I don't eat them; I have fun making a big mess. One time, I was caught with an air potato in my mouth and was harshly directed by Mary to "drop that right now!" which I did. Mary then noticed the potato was moving. Obviously, it was not an air potato. It was a small turtle that I had found on my most recent walk. Hugh put the poor turtle back in the pond, no worse for the experience, except for some elevated PTSS.

As to social experiences, my lifetime highlight is my 10th birthday party. Mary & Hugh invited all the canine BVE residents to attend the gala staged in the Sun Room. Mary provided a special cake, all kinds of treats, and party favors. Everybody was on their best behavior. It was quite a photo-op.

Although I am a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, my behavior is a bit different. I am not a furniture dog. I like the floor level most of the time. I do not shed at all, which makes Mary & Hugh and their housekeeper quite happy. I am not a big barker, which makes the neighbors happy. When I was a puppy, I never chewed any shoes or furniture. I have a ruby coat, brown to some people, but it is very curly. I visit a groomer once a month to keep my appearance spiffy. I love my family and always want to be near them, but I am not a lap dog. I may want to be on the big bed at night, but five minutes later, I am in my bed in the corner under the desk.

I don't have fleas, a blessing for both dogs and their owners. New meds now control this issue. However, I have allergies that are associated with scratching and tail biting, which drives my owners and me crazy. Fortunately, new, not cheap, meds are now available to manage my situation to be a non-issue. As I get older, I am facing new medical concerns. I have dry eye syndrome. Just like some humans, my tear ducts do not work right. My canine eye specialist prescribed eye drops, which Mary & Hugh administer to me twice a day. Not unusual for my breed, I have developed a severe heart murmur, which requires more meds. Now, in my senior years, I have been diagnosed with dog dementia. The symptoms are not unlike those of humans. And if that is not enough, I am losing use of my rear legs, and I am totally deaf. It is not always fun to be an old dog, but I am well cared for by my family and loved by many. I am a lucky dog. When my time is up, Mary & Hugh plan to scatter my cremains in a nearby nature park. They have made similar arrangements for themselves. One day, we will all be back together again in the cosmos from which we came.

PS - Katie crossed the rainbow bridge on July 11, 2026 age 12 years 16 days.

Four Weeks

Home at 8 weeks

12 Weeks

Thanks Bill

My birthday cake

Anna loves me too

My safe place

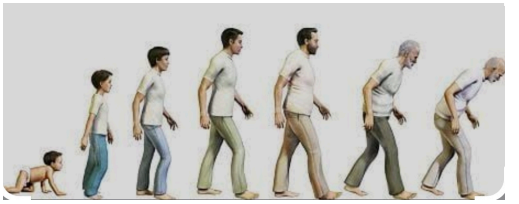
My Dad Dash

Jessie meets me

Always a good idea to kiss up to Santa

Maggie & John have a special bond with me

Looking My Best

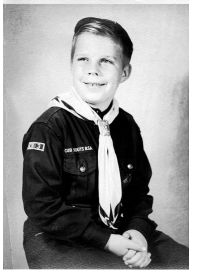


Reflections

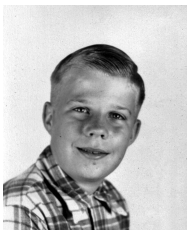
I am in my ninth decade. Initially, I considered compiling a decade-by-decade photo essay of my life. While rummaging through my photo collections, I realized that there were several decades during which the photos of my life were few. However, on reflection, I can now see the flow from one decade to the next, the arrow of time. Each decade almost has its own unique, distinctive theme, like an unfinished symphony with nine movements and a grand finale yet to be written.

My first decade, the 1940s, was my childhood. I don't remember much about the first half, but I have a couple of photos. I remember that my Grandmother Crawford had a Kodak Brownie camera. Film and processing weren't cheap, so photos were few in number, unlike today's cell phone cameras, which have overwhelmed us with baby, puppy, kitty, and sunset pictures.

The first half of my childhood was during WW-II. I do not know anyone in our family who was in uniform. I think my dad may have been exempt because he was working in the defense industry in Detroit and had a wife and one child. He was working for Dodge, which was building trucks and tanks for the U.S. Army. My dad, along with most of his extended family, had migrated from their Kansas farms during the mid-1930s to Detroit in search of employment. After the war, my dad did well building pre-fabricated houses for returning veterans. I learned to ride a bike and was a Cub Scout. I went fishing and tried to make a raft to venture down the river. I played marbles at recess. I had a Springer Spaniel dog named Lady. I listened to the Lone Ranger on the radio. When I was ten, my mother went to a TB sanitarium It was not the first time



My second decade, the 1950s, was my coming-of-age decade; high school, rock and roll, Boy Scouts, the cold war, and cars with fins. I had a camera and was on the high school photography staff, but again, cost kept my photo collection minimal. Our family moved to Florida when I was 17 years old.

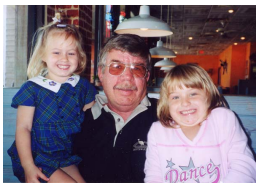


My third decade, the 1960s, was my twenties, my fledgling decade. I learned to fly on my own and left the nest, even though I came back home for two years after my four-year Navy tour to attend junior college. I left for good at age 24 to get my BS and MS degrees at the University of Florida. This was the decade of Vietnam, civil rights, political assassinations, and growing distrust of institutions. My mother died at age 53.

My fourth decade, the 1970s, my thirties, my I have arrived decade. I had a new first real job as an engineer, a new car, a first house, dating, and a community involvement overload, which ultimately led to burnout. I don't know how I managed to do it all

My fifth decade, the 1980s, was my 40s, a decade of retraction. It started with a health scare, which set me back. I bought a sports car. I stayed home a lot. I drank too much. I went to my 30th high school reunion. I called Mary for advice.

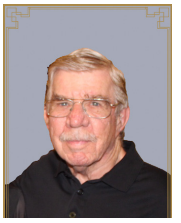
My sixth decade, the 1990s, was my 50s, it was a time of significant change, all in all, much for the better. Mary and I got married, sold my house, retired, and became a grandfather. We started extensive RV travel.

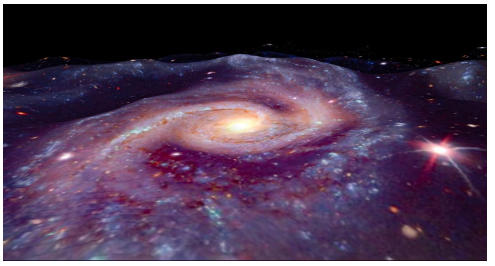


My seventh decade, the 2000s, was my 60s. It included much travel and adventure, moving to Melbourne Village, community involvement, and grandchildren. It was my most fulfilling and rewarding decade.

My eighth decade, the 2010s, was my 70s. It was my first, aging-aware decade, travel slowed down. We sadly sold our home and moved to our final home at BVE. It was our new reality, with new friends, and new interests. A smart move.

My ninth decade, the 2020s, are my eighties. It is marked by health challenges, shorter days, and letting go, while trying to be grateful for the gift of life and love. It is a time to relish the little things and try to figure out what it all means. It is a time to reflect.





Ancestors

I have a lot of Ancestors going back to who knows where to start. Our creation story says that would be Adam and Eve. I actually knew six of my Ancestors. They were my parents, three of my four grandparents, and one of my great-grandparents. My grandmother (Croxon) Crawford, my mother's birth mother, died when my mother was only three years old. My mother only knew her step-mother. Of my eight great-grandparents, only one was alive during my lifetime. She was my father's paternal grandmother, Barbara Mariah (Sappenfield) Nicolay. I actually lived in the same house with her for a year in Detroit when I was about ten years old. I lived with or near my paternal grandparents from the age of six to 17. My maternal grandfather and my step-grandmother lived forty miles away during these same years, and I saw them often. After my mom, dad, brother, sister, and I moved from Michigan to Florida when I was 17, I mostly lost contact with all my other relatives.

Then there were all the ancestors I never knew, but to some extent, their DNA impacted who I am. I have a family tree on Ancestry that goes back 21 generations, about 500 years. Credit for its creation goes to other researchers. Of the possible 2,097,150 ancestors in these 21 generations, I have names and minimal information for 187 of them.

Family lore is that our family is German. It is documented that my third great-grandfather Nicolay, his wife, and their five children left Essingen, Germany, located in the Bavaria region, for America in 1838. They first landed in New Orleans, traveled north to Cincinnati, Ohio for a brief time, and then found good farm land farther north along the Illinois River north of St. Louis. Thirty years

later, the youngest son, John George Nicolay, who became Abraham Lincoln's personal secretary, purchased a section and a half, 960 acres, at $1.75 per acre, of virgin ‘Indian land’ in Eastern Kansas. One of his older brothers moved his family, including my great grandfather to Kansas in 1868 to establish a farm on this land. My Nicolay grandfather and my father were both born there.

Many Nicolay family members, including my wife and me, have made a point of visiting the old Nicolay homestead in Essingen, Germany. Distant cousins still live there, and some of them have visited their Nicolay kin here in the U.S.

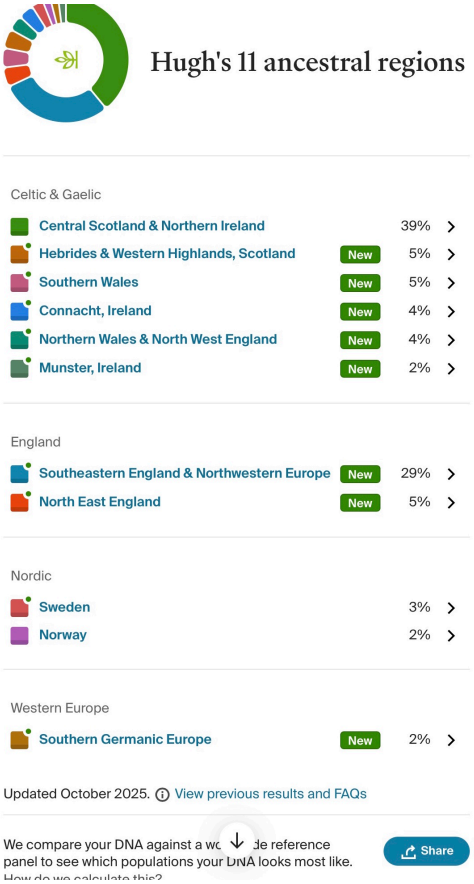
Since most of us Americans, with minor exceptions, are descendants of immigrants, knowing where your ancestors originated in Europe or elsewhere seems to interest. I participated in the Ancestry DNA test to learn where my ancestors originated—surprise, surprise. I am only 2% Germanic. I am 60% Celtic and Gaelic, and 34% English.

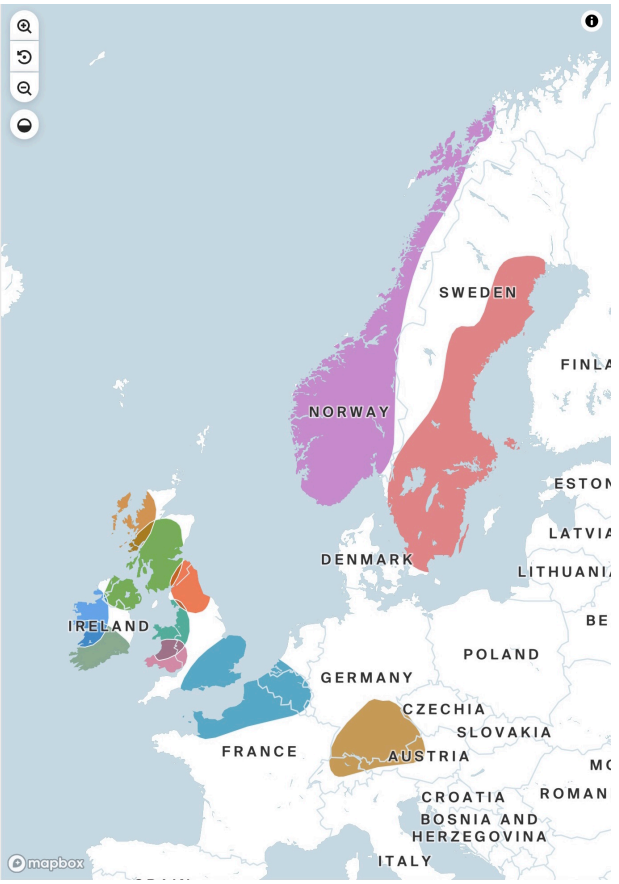
My most recent immigrant ancestor was my maternal grandfather, born in Canada and who moved to the U.S. before he married. His parents were born in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Looking at my family tree, it appears that most of my immigrant ancestors that we know about came from England, many of them via Canada. The earliest immigrants I can see in the family tree came in the early 1600s. None of them were on the Mayflower. As far as I can tell, none were in the Revolutionary War or any other war.

Reverse migration? We have retired friends who recently moved from Florida to France. We have thought about Canada, but if it becomes the 51st state, what good would it do? Besides, it's cold up there.

Nicolay Homestead, Essingen, Germany

Dragoon Creek, Nicolay Family Farm,Osage County, Kansas


Hugh's 11 ancestral regions
Celtic & Gaelic
Central Scotland & Northern Ireland 39%
Hebrides & Western Highlands, Scotland New 5%
Southern Wales New 5%
Connacht, Ireland New 4%
Northern Wales & North West England New 4%
Munster, Ireland New 2%
England
Southeastern England & Northwestern Europe New 29%
North East England New 5%
Nordic
Sweden 3%
Norway 2%
Western Europe
Southern Germanic Europe New 2%
Updated October 2025. View previous results and FAQs
We compare your DNA against a wo de reference panel to see which populations your DNA looks most like.
How do we calculate this?
Share



Ancestry DNA

Slave Master

My 5th great-grandfather freed his slaves, well, sort of. In his will, he gave his 14 slaves to his children and his wife, with the provision that the male slaves be freed when they reached the age of 28 and the females at the age of 21. When I first came across the will of my 5th great-grandfather, Rasin Gale (1735-1797), I was taken aback by the reality that I had a slave-owning ancestor. I thought this was a southern thing; I was a Yankee from Michigan, but Grandpa Gale was in Maryland.

He named his slaves by first name in his will, such as "To my daughter Rachel... a negro boy Saul, 20 to serve 8 years then free." I had never heard about the practice of freeing enslaved people at a certain age, but it turned out to be a common practice. In Maryland, state law made provision for the practice. In the neighboring state of Pennsylvania, it was the law that, at a certain age, all enslaved people were to be freed. There is a name for this, delayed manumission. I thought President Lincoln freed the enslaved people, and that was it.

Research indicates it was a common practice during the late 1700s in the more northern slave states, as opposed to the deep South. There was a strong anti-slavery movement in the churches, but there was also the economic reality of growing labor-intensive tobacco. So a compromise was reached.

The Gale plantation in Maryland was named Worton Manor. There is a community in Kent County, Eastern Maryland, named Worton. Rasin Gale was the first in the Gale line to be born in America. His father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all born in England but died in America. It appears Rasin Gale was the last generation to stay in Maryland. All his children moved west to Indiana and Illinois.

There are many interesting questions that I could research about the economics and life on the plantation, but it probably won't happen.

What happened to Saul? Did he already expect to be freed at age 28? Did he have big plans once he was free? Did he think life would be any different after Master Gale died and his daughter became his owner?

The Gale and Nicolay family trees and the Rasin Gale will can be found on ancestry.com. The best I could do is add Saul and all the others as a non-biological dependents linked to Rasin Gale and include a copy of Rasin’s will and this story.

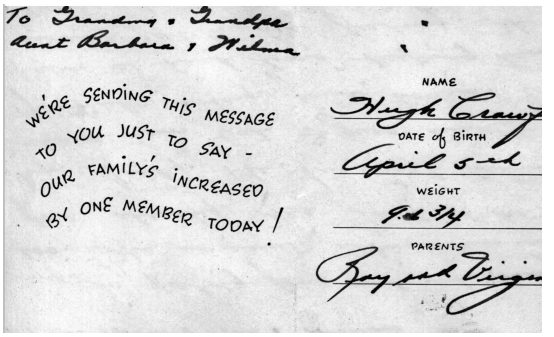
Lum

My great-grandfather Nicolay's nickname was Lum. You don't hear that name very often. His full name was Columbus Edwin Nicolay. I was 50-plus years old before I knew the names of my great-grandparents. For some reason, I became interested in my family history, maybe because of an upcoming family reunion I hoped to attend.

I was visiting my only living aunt in Michigan, and she directed me to a cousin who had access to the family tree compiled by someone who wasn't even a relative. My aunt wasn't very interested in relatives she didn't know, even though she had lived her entire life with her mother, my grandmother, in the same house until my grandmother passed. On a return visit with my aunt a few years later, she gave me some papers she had discovered in the attic. They turned out to be my most treasured family history find.

The best one was my birth announcement, which my mother had sent to her in-laws living on the family farm in Kansas. For my grandmother Nicolay, I was her first grandchild. My mother had only met her mother-in-law once, on her honeymoon. My dad took her to Kansas to meet those of his family members who were still living there. Grandma had kept it for 50 years for me to discover.

Hugh Nicolay
BVE Write Your Life Group
9 March 2026
Credits - Apple Pages, Grammarly, Mary



Birth

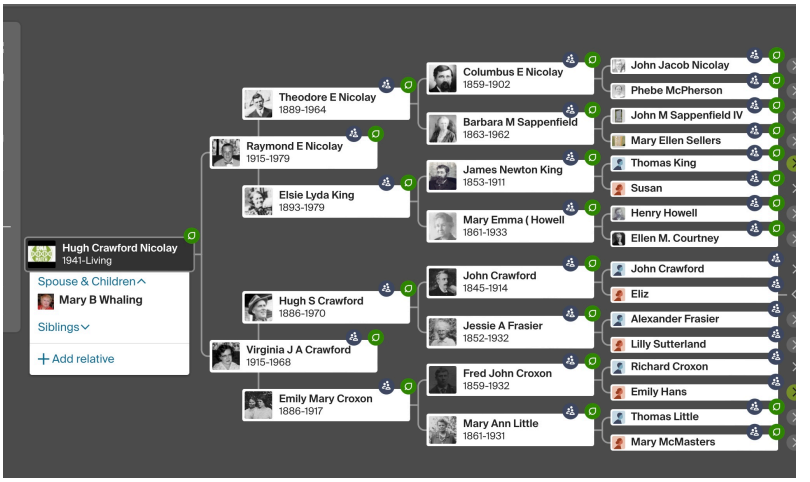
Announcement Transcription (Gemini)

"Grandma & Grandpa, Aunt Barbara, & Wilma".

* Message: "We're sending this message to you just to say - our family's increased by one member today!"
* Name: Hugh Crawford
* Date of Birth: April 5th
* Weight: 9 lbs 6 3/4 oz
* Parents: Ray and Virginia

Note/letter on back:
April 8, 1941
Dear Mom & Dad & Sisters,
I'm feeling fine and the baby too. He is so sweet. His skin is fair already. He's just like his Daddy. The Dr. won't let me nurse him but I give him his formula every four hours. I have a hard time keeping him awake while he's feeding. He took it better today, though.
The Dr. said he was gaining. It happened very unexpectedly. I was at Mother's when I had to go to the Hospital. I'm glad it is all over. Doesn't seem so bad now. I came in the Hospital at 10 a.m. and the Baby was born at 3:39 P.M.
Must close with Love,
Ray, Virginia, and Hugh

Virginia and son Hugh



Hugh's parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and great-great grandparents

85

It's good to be alive. It's good to know I am alive. It is a most pleasant morning. I am sitting alone on our little screened porch overlooking our little patch of woods. The sky's bright. There is a light breeze moving the tree leaves. I can hear blue jays and the neighbor's wind chime. The hummingbirds have moved south, so their feeder just outside is quiet. I checked the Purple Martin nest cameras. Jane and Betty are brooding their eggs. Another generation is in the making. Our senior dog, Katie, is sleeping nearby. She is comforted to know we are here to keep her safe. I am likewise comforted to know I am safe and people who care about me are nearby. My body and brain seem to function still, even though I skip a beat now and then.

Today is the first Sunday after the first full moon after the first day of spring. Besides being Easter Sunday, today is my 85th birthday. It is the tenth time my birthday has fallen on Easter. The next time will be my 96th birthday. By most measures, I am now old. If it weren't for clocks and calendars, I am not sure I would realize this reality. It's good to be alive and appreciate life. I am at peace. As the saying goes, God’s grace is shinning on me.

Hugh Crawford Nicolay
April 5, 2026

Cousins at our Grandparents in LaSalle

Cousin Patti's son Charles sent me a message this week letting me know his mother, Patrica Boyle Clark, had died. She was 78. It was very thoughtful of him. Sadly, I have completely lost contact with all my first cousins during the last decade. Of the 14 of us, I am the oldest, and now six have already passed. RIP. We will meet again in the cosmos.

Sunday and holidays at Grandma and Grandpa Nicolay's in LaSalle, Michigan might find cousins Hughie, Jackie, Carol, Bobby, and Patti all gathered with the rest of the family including Ray and Virginia Nicolay, my parents, Uncle George and Aunt Lillian Boyle, Bobby and Patti's parents, our Aunt Wilma who was a teenage, and sometimes my other grandparents, Grandpa and Grandma Crawford who along with the Boyles would drive down from Detroit, maybe 40 miles away. We lived nearby.

More likely than not, fried chicken was on the menu along with plenty of fresh vegetables from Grandma's large garden. Fresh-baked pies would probably be cooling on the kitchen counter, and if we were lucky, homemade ice cream would be on the menu. This involved a trip to the ice house to get a large block of ice, which we chipped into small pieces that fit in the hand-cranked ice cream maker. If it was Spring, fresh-picked strawberries might be added. We kids would get a chance to turn the crank, but the task soon would be too hard for us as the ice cream began to thicken.

I don't remember what us kids did while dinner was being prepared, but you can be sure we were outside somewhere. Grandma didn't like kids underfoot in her kitchen. Grandpa Nicolay always had a swing hanging in the big weeping willow tree. Grandpa's yard was full of interesting things for us to explore. He was a farmer and a tinkerer who saved everything. He loved going to local Saturday farm auctions to add more stuff to his collection.

Grandpa Nicolay always planted a few rows of popcorn in his garden. It was our job to get the kernels off the cob, usually with our thumbs and bare hands. It was worth the effort if Grandma would put a handful into a big pot of hot oil to finish

the process. Another great treat was watermelon, fresh from the garden. We would have to take our large slices outside for the inevitable seed-spitting ritual.

Sometimes my Grandpa Crawford could be coaxed into taking all us kids to nearby Lake Erie for a swim. He would stay in his car and listen to a Detroit Tigers baseball game while we waded through the murky water and dodged the dead, floating carp. Too soon for us, he would honk the horn in his car, and we would make the five-mile drive back to LaSalle.

I have a few memories of visiting the Boyle home in Detroit. I remember Aunt Lillian kept a perfectly ordered home, and Uncle George a perfectly ordered yard. For some reason, I remember the teacups rattled as you walked across the living room. I liked going there because they lived just a couple of blocks from the major Detroit airport. The roaring takeoffs and landings went right over their house. A couple times we got to go to the airport to see all the activity.

Our family left Michigan for Florida in1958 when I was 17 years old. Patti would have been maybe 10. I only saw her once more after that, in 1992, when we were visiting AZ.

Hugh Nicolay
June 13, 2026

Boyle family - George, Patti, Bobby, Lillian

Hugh and Patti
1992 Chandler, AZ

Appendix

In addition, biographic information can be found:

There is an Ancestry.com family tree named NICOLAY-CRAWFORD. You can find me in the tree and the media attached to it, including photos and documents. An Ancestry account is needed, but limited read only access does not require purchasing a subscription.

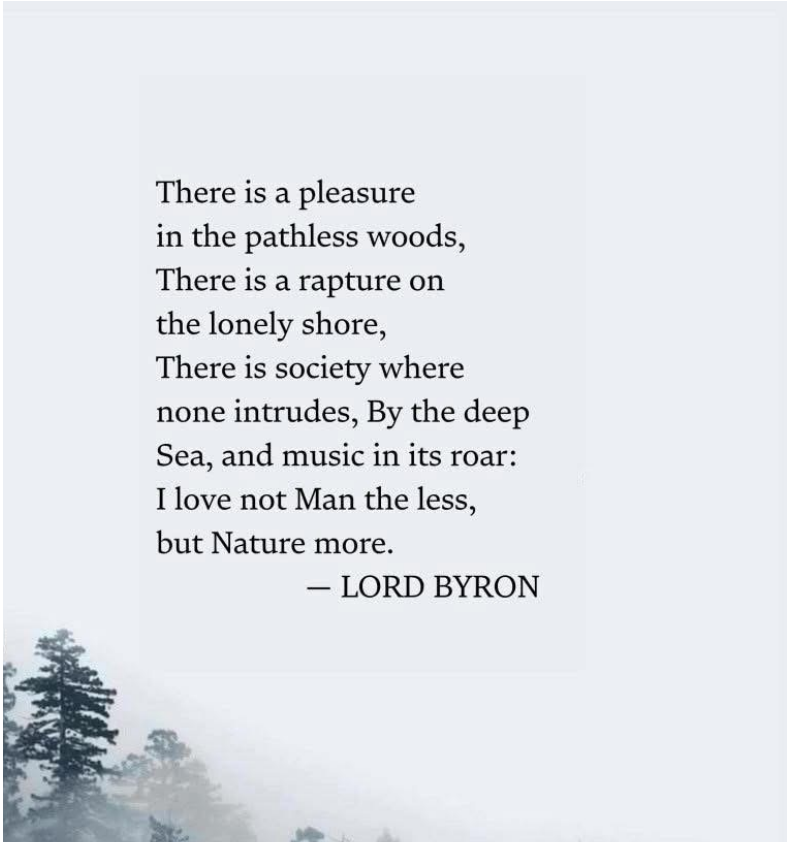
Archive.org website. Search the Internet Archive HUGH NICOLAY for uploaded files. Includes 12-minute photo slideshow with direct link:
https://archive.org/details/HughSlideShow3

Youtube.com. The following links access private uploaded videos:

Nicolay Old 8MM Movies
https://youtu.be/TmC6Oz8NlGA
Nicolay Family Reunion 1991 Patty Abel Video
https://youtu.be/reJihVxIHqQ
Mary & Hugh Nicolay Wedding 20 DEC 1992
https://youtu.be/hfB20bhhuX0
Mary & Hugh Nicolay Wedding Open House 24JAN1993
https://youtu.be/s2BV2Gm1KnQ
Nicolay Ray Rosemond Audio Letter to Son John
https://youtu.be/rrJs3ltHuYM

TinyBook is a digital archive of Mary and Hugh's married years, including travel, Christmas letters, and more. Access is via Mary and Hugh's iCloud accounts, which possess physical microchip media backup.

Another archive on microchips includes digital media that pertains specifically to me. Most are duplicates of files on Ancestry.com NICOLAY-CRAWFORD tree or created by report creation tools on Family Tree Maker.


There is a pleasure
in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on
the lonely shore,
There is society where
none intrudes, By the deep
Sea, and music in its roar:
I love not Man the less,
but Nature more.
— LORD BYRON